Appendix A

- Mandin, L. **"French Immersion: How It Works."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999.
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- Halsall, Nancy D. **"French Immersion: The Success Story Told by Research."** Keynote Address in *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999.
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- Alberta Education. ***Language Learning in French Immersion Classrooms in the Transition Year: Information for School Administrators.*** (Available in 2003)

- Halsall, Nancy D. **"Poverty and French Immersion Mix."** *Journal de l'immersion Journal* 23, *2* (July 2001).
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- Lapkin, S. **"Uses and Misuses of Research in School Board Decision-Making: Examples from French Immersion."** *Contact* 10, *3* (October 1991).
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- ***What do I want for my child?/Qu'est-ce que je veux pour mon enfant?***
  Edmonton: [n.d.], 2000.

- ***Yes, You Can Help! Information and Inspiration for French Immersion Parents.*** Revised Edition.
  Edmonton: Alberta Learning, 2002.

BACKGROUNDER

French Immersion: How It Works

> "No educational program has been so intensively researched and evaluated in Canada as has French immersion. The effects of the program on the acquisition of French-language as well as English-language skills, and the academic achievement of French immersion students, have been well documented and research shows the program works." **(Canadian Education Association, 1992, p2)**

Since its inception 35 years ago, the program has evolved but the distinct feature of immersion remains—teaching curriculum via a second language. French immersion is a highly successful approach to second language learning—an effective way for students to become functionally fluent in a second language while achieving all of the objectives of a regular program.

How well does it work? One only has to think about the numerous students in Alberta who successfully write diploma exams in French in Social Studies 30, Biology 30 and Math 30. Not only do they learn a second language but they also develop their ability to think, to reflect, to analyze and to apply knowledge. They develop what we call second language proficiency, which enables them to master concepts as simple as colours and the family, and as complex as the causes of the world wars and trigonometry. Indeed, learning another language in an immersion setting is not limited to the language per se, its vocabulary or its grammatical rules. It is learning the skills of communicating, according to social and cultural context. It is adapting communicative strategies to get the message across, or cracking the right joke without making a cultural or linguistic *faux pas*. Many adults who have learned French as a second language know how difficult and frustrating it can be to express themselves in French. It is not the case for French immersion students. They don't have to blush, get nervous or think twice to express their thoughts. French speakers do not switch to English when they speak to French immersion students. They perceive immersion students as being able to carry on a normal conversation in French, so they just continue to speak French.

How Do Students Achieve This Level Of Functional Bilingualism?

Second language acquisition vs. first language acquisition

For the child, learning French the immersion way will be much the same as learning in his first language. In a typical French immersion classroom, the 'gentle approach' is used. The teacher uses French all of the time, speaking in English only if a student's health or safety is at risk. Gestures, mime, pictures and objects are used to help the children understand. Very quickly, through watching and listening, the students begin to recognize words and phrases, responding appropriately.

Immersion students learn to be good listeners. From the beginning, they have to pay very close attention to the teacher, in order to understand what is happening in the classroom. They must attend not only to words but also to gestures, body movements, intonation and expression. In addition to these clues, they pick up on the similarities between certain English and French words (e.g. "banana" and "banane").

Children also become very sensitive to the teacher's response to what they do and say. The teacher listens and observes carefully to verify what information the students possess and understand. On this basis, she consciously adapts her speech and classroom activities to assist the children. The early years of schooling have to be more structured until a functional level of fluency is reached. As language develops, the potential of meaning-making develops, resulting in second language proficiency, that is, using language for real purposes. Students are able to use the target language in various social-communicative situations as well as in academic-intellectual situations. Once the students develop a certain level of second language proficiency, they are able to engage in divergent or evaluative thinking processes which will lead to the creation of new thought schemata by means of the target language. As children acquire more meanings in the second language, they become better able to use the second language for cognitively demanding tasks. It takes years of immersion schooling to reach such a level of comfort in communication. The more exposure students have to French and the more they use it, the better their communication skills and the greater their confidence in their ability to use the language.

Immersion students gain control over two language systems and they are accustomed to learning the nuances of another language in order to be understood by their teacher and in their mother tongue by their parents and neighbours. Immersion works so well because the students are not just studying the language—they are using it in meaningful ways.

Positive transfers

Clearly, the research shows us that students' knowledge of English is not in jeopardy in French immersion programs. Many children are reading before they start school; some begin on their own to read in English once they have acquired this skill in their second language. It seems clear that once literacy skills are well established in one language, they transfer readily and rapidly to the other language.

Both French and English are read from left to right, both use groups of letters to form words and groups of words to form sentences, and both use the same alphabet. All of this makes it relatively easy for children to transfer the skills of reading from French to English or from English to French. However, because the children in Alberta are constantly exposed to English in the home and in the community, their knowledge of English is not threatened. We should therefore take this opportunity to immerse the young students in the target language so as to ensure that their level of language is sufficiently functional to enhance their ability to understand what they read as they learn the mechanics and the strategies of reading.

Level of stress for immersion students

Children in immersion programs accept French as a normal part of their schooling. Obviously, the younger the child, the easier it appears for them. Healy (1990) in his book *Endangered Minds*, tells us "the brain is ravenous for language stimulation in early childhood but becomes increasingly resistant to change when puberty arrives" (p. 86). Since language shapes our thinking, and sharpens our ability to reason, to reflect and to respond to the world, it is important that we focus on this moment to introduce young children to a second language. We all know bilingual or trilingual children who are able to communicate to different audiences in their language of choice. Penfield tells us children can learn up to five languages simultaneously, providing the audience is relatively stable. We know that young children who are exposed to a second language quickly develop fluency with a native accent. This is seen, for example, among children living in a foreign country who have a nanny or whose parents use two different languages in the home.

As for the notion that children will find it difficult to begin school in a second language, researchers (Weber & Tardif, 1990), comparing reactions of children beginning immersion and English kindergartens, reveal to us that the issue is not the language but simply adapting to the new social setting with children they do not yet know.

> The fact that not understanding the teachers seemed only a minor nuisance to the children could indicate that children are more tolerant of ambiguity than are adults. Even in their first language, young children are accustomed to not understanding everything adults say. In addition, they do not feel as socially awkward about not understanding as adults might in a similar situation, nor are they as reluctant to ask for help. Not knowing everything, relying on adults and asking lots of questions are part of the socially accepted role of being a child...At the beginning of the year, the immersion kindergarten children often told us that they didn't understand French but were adamant in telling us they understood the teacher, who spoke almost exclusively in French.(p.57)

Older children and adults have far more difficulty learning another language and developing an authentic accent.

The classroom context

Successful teachers in French immersion programs are mindful of three factors: how children learn, how children learn languages, and their own ability to serve as good linguistic models. These teachers are aware that learning a language is a long, complex and continuous process. It is a labour of love and patience. Because we believe the process is as important as the product, their pedagogy must reflect and value both. Furthermore, the teachers must not lose sight of the double mandate of French immersion programs: teaching the curriculum and teaching a second language.

The problem may not be one of learning in a second language or in one's native language but one of pedagogy. In order to learn, children's minds must be stimulated by learning situations which will enable them to function at all thinking levels in the language of instruction of the classroom. Every pedagogical action influences the development of children.

Ideally, the French immersion teachers should consider the pedagogical implications identified among the distinguishing characteristics of immersion practices. Among the practices which deserve attention in immersion classes, we find:

- the ability to simplify teacher talk to a level that makes it possible for the learners to process the information,
- the ability to assist children in expressing the acquired information in their own words,
- the ability to create activities inviting students to produce comprehensible output at the appropriate age level, not only for pedagogic functions but also for organizational and social function.

The Roles of Decision-Makers

As decision-makers in French immersion programs, a number of issues surface at this time. To keep the programs healthy and viable, we must, together, reflect on fundamental questions such as:

- why does it make sense for children to be exposed to a second language from kindergarten?
- depending on grade level, what are the points at which there is too little exposure to or use of French to make an immersion program work—that is, the students' French skills are not adequate for the acquisition of concepts and skills in math, science and social studies?
- as an English speaking unilingual administrator of a school/district offering an immersion program, what do I need to know to supervise and evaluate instruction?
- as a supervisor or evaluator of programs, what are indicators of appropriate and effective teaching strategies?
- as an administrator, which qualities are important in a French immersion teacher?
- what are the differences between a good immersion teacher and an excellent immersion teacher?

Conclusion

Teaching in a French immersion context demands support and dialogue. Educators teaching in French immersion programs need to reflect on their beliefs regarding learning, language acquisition and ideal pedagogical practices in such a context. They need time to reflect as well as strong leaders who will accompany them as they probe their pedagogical practices. Who asks the questions? Are we asking the right questions? The parents—what is their role in this endeavour?

In order to continue to ensure success in our immersion programs, we must continue to reflect on what is happening in French immersion classrooms. A stronger partnership between teachers, administrators and researchers would enhance the possibilities of assisting all educators involved in this initiative to further improve our pedagogical practices in French immersion schools. A reflection *on* and *in action* clearly helps raise the level of consciousness of teachers as they attempt to meet the challenging but rewarding task of teaching children in a second language. Teaching should not be a solitary activity. As educators, we must question even what seems so obvious!

Dr. Lucille Mandin, Associate Professor, Faculté Saint-Jean, Edmonton, Alberta

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SESSION NOTES

French Immersion: How It Works

Lucille Mandin

The following summary was prepared from notes taken during the session by a volunteer recorder, and from any other written records of the session as may have been kept on flip charts or work sheets. The summary was reviewed by the session presenter and printed with his agreement.

Opening concerns raised by delegates

French immersion programs are challenged by attrition. Why?

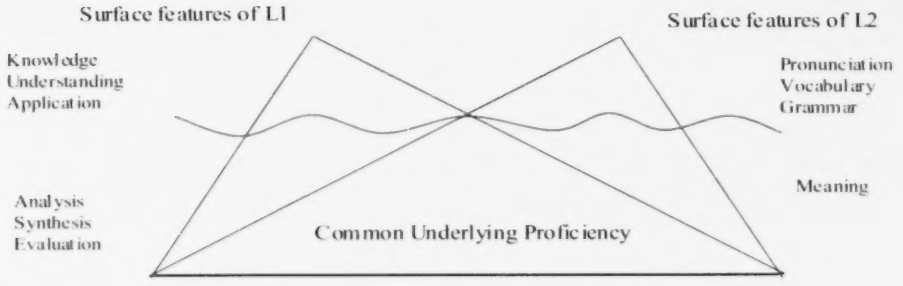
We've stopped promoting the program, riding on past success stories. We have taken for granted that the momentum is strong enough to ensure continuity.

We may have forgotten why it works, and why and when it works so well. There is therefore a need to promote the program more positively through such means as providing research results to parents.

French immersion programs need to be improved/enhanced.

Because we have forgotten the fundamental principals of immersion pedagogy, the program is often watered down. Whether consciously or unconsciously, there is a perception that the program is too difficult for the students and therefore English is often overused in classrooms, particularly in the early years. It is not uncommon to hear English spoken in Kindergarten in March. This is also evident throughout the program, but particularly at the high school level. As we get closer to university, French is used more and more sparsely; therefore the end results are flawed.

The dual iceberg Representation of Bilingual Proficiency



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Modified by Mandin, 1985

We need to work on increasing comprehensible language input for our students and providing multiple opportunities for student output in authentic contexts. We must focus on the importance of interaction in French in our classes—teacher-student and student-student interactions. Attention must also be given to error correction to avoid error fossilization.

We need to reflect on pedagogical practices, that is, on what happens in the classroom. Too much emphasis is placed on results and not enough on how we get these results.

[Dr. Mandin's presentation followed.]

Issues

How does French immersion work?

In a typical French immersion classroom, the "gentle approach" is used. The teacher uses French all of the time, offering the children a rich, varied linguistic environment similar to the one in which he learned his first language.

What is the difference between acquiring and learning a language? Language acquisition refers to the natural approach. It focuses on the need to communicate and to get things done in the language. The exploration of meaning is done in the context of interaction with significant others. On the other hand, learning a language focuses on forms to be mastered. Learners are very conscious that they are studying a language. In the immersion setting, students are introduced to the second language via the natural approach; however, conscious learning is also part of the process.

What does learning a second language do for children?

It not only helps them learn a language; it helps them learn how to learn.

Children become very good listeners and sharp communicators. They learn to attend to gestures and contexts, not just to words. They become very sensitive to the teacher's response (tone, intonation, body language), and to the context of communication.

Children learn to get control over two languages. They are able to transfer skills from one language to the other effortlessly. Language awareness is sharpened.

Children develop a sense of pride if they are supported in their endeavor of learning a second language. This pride creates a sense of belonging (particularly important fir children with learning disabilities who often suffer as a result of transferring out of the program.)

How do children make meaning when learning a second language?

Cummins' model of the "dual iceberg" of bilingual proficiency was presented. (See figure below.) This schema demonstrates the fact that children are not empty headed when they register in the French immersion program at Kindergarten. They have knowledge/comprehension of their first language on many levels (semantic, syntax, grammar, phonics). This knowledge is learned through modeling and through significant communication in authentic contexts.

Children also have a basic understanding of the world, referred to as a common underlying proficiency in Cummins' diagram. They have knowledge and an ability to comprehend, apply, analyze, synthesize and evaluate the world in which they live. They are also creative, divergent and critical thinkers, albeit at their level of development.

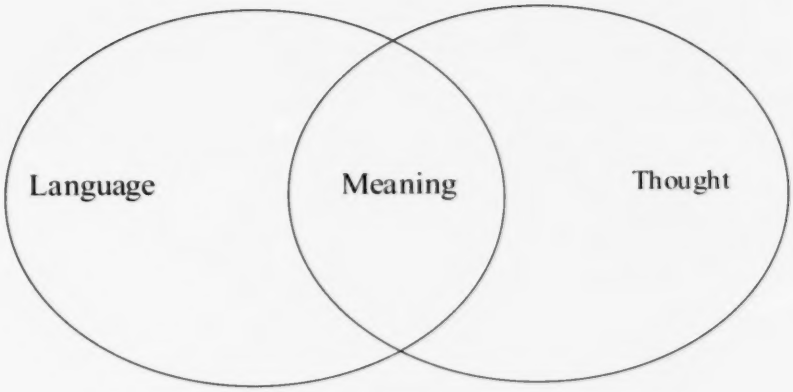
In a French immersion program, teachers must be mindful of the outstanding triangle in the iceberg model—the triangle of surface features of the second language which involves visible features such as spelling, pronunciation and grammar—on which there is too much emphasis in the early years. Teachers need to emphasize the deep semantic and functional meaning, which is equally important in learning a second language as in learning a first. Today we have become so content-focused (result-based) that we neglect some of the cognitive abilities or skills required in developing deeper thinking skills.

Immersion pedagogy must involve "connected" knowing in which the language is being developed while there is learning in subject areas. We therefore need strong language models who can adjust the linguistic input to the learner's level of development (N+1, Krashen) and have the ability to inspire students to articulate knowledge in their own words.

In the communicative approach, language and thought are developed simultaneously. (See figure below) Thought and language are two intersecting circles with the overlap constituting "meaning making". This is possible with authentic learning experiences where kids are kept connected to what they know and are continually constructing meaning. If we keep the two circles connected all the time, we will be mindful of the questions we generate, since it is these questions which will allow us to get at the deeper levels of meaning.

Characteristics of a desirable environment for second language learning

A Communicative Approach



Kindergarten teachers should speak almost exclusively in French. Teachers must remember that children are capable of making meaning within the context of the classroom. Children may use different strategies to bring meaning to teacher input, many of the same strategies they use to understand their native language. Teachers must be conscious that their non-verbal language is just as important as their verbal code in the early years. Repetition through songs, games and routines are also to be part of the educational practices in early childhood immersion classes.

Children should be corrected with tact.

Teachers should endeavor to create a safe climate in which students are able to take risks. Students learn language by using it in authentic contexts.

The success of the program depends on early emphasis on rich, authentic teacher input and opportunities for student output in significant contexts. Learning a language is a long, complex and continuous process.

Pedagogical concerns

Factors contributing to a second language literacy?

French immersion educators must be mindful of the following factors contributing to second language literacy:

- linguistic variables—oral base (N+1)—building on vocabulary and language structures

- literacy variables—purpose of reading, intention and level of understanding
- knowledge variables—background information, what is significant to children

As presented in the "dual iceberg" model, the linguistic variable draws our attention in French immersion programs. Because, the literacy and knowledge variables are part of the basic understanding children already possess, the good French immersion teacher builds on vocabulary and language structures by making students aware of linguistic transfers such as cognates, consonants and sentence structures. She/he also ensures that students use their own words to make meaning so that reading is truly understanding print, bring meaning to text, not simply decoding. This critical oral component must be linked to the child's experience.

The concern must be with the language that is feeding the learning. Reading must be closely linked with the literacy variable. The delaying threshold is very important to ensuring that children will be ready and will have had sufficient comprehensible input to be able to bring meaning to text. To create a rich linguistic environment to prepare children for reading, these features must be built into the pedagogical practices: simple teacher talk, interaction, referential questions encouraging children to answer in their own words, opportunities to control the development of topics, a climate of confidence, and using a second language not only to teach concepts but also in the organization of the classroom.

When is not enough French an issue?

Concerns were expressed with respect to the early (Grade 1) introduction of English Language Arts. The use of English in the early grades robs the student of optimal exposure to the target language (French) thus sacrificing the precious time needed for critical comprehensible input. We need to remember that students need a rich linguistic environment in which to develop literacy. This is especially important in second language programs. The period of oral development in the second language must be rich and extended. The more students hear and explore deep semantic and functional meaning with the second language, the faster they will learn to read. Once children understand the connection between the oral and the written language, the process of reading will be accelerated. However, texts must be at the appropriate level of development of the second language. In our resource-driven world, it is dangerous to expose students to texts for which they are not ready. If this occurs over a long period, students convince themselves that reading is too difficult, that they are not capable of reading.

Participants' concerns

Some administrators have no experience with French or with second language learning and, therefore, do not make good decisions regarding the programs, including staffing decisions.

Unfortunately, teachers who are less fluent in French and have lower levels of second language mastery are often assigned to lower grades and this is where the comprehensible input is critical. They are often less able to spontaneously provide the critical (N+1) level of language. It is the adjustment of the code to the audience that enhances immersion program success.

Concern was expressed that administrators sometimes say that if it's an important concept, then it should be taught in English.

Alberta Education's expectations with respect to the Early Literacy Program are counter-productive in French immersion programs. Teachers are being told that the resources must be in English. French immersion teachers are asked to identify students by October and to start working with them by December (with English resources.) This encourages more emphasis on the use of English in the classroom.

The process of teaching children how to read must be revisited. It is important that the reading process not emphasize surface features only. Too much focus on surface features produces students who can decode but cannot bring meaning to text. Students must discover meaning, make strategies as the learn how to read. For example, they should be alerted to the images created in their minds as they read and given strategies as to what to so when they do not know a word.

Teachers are often restricted by the structure of the classroom and the presentation of the Program of Studies, which tend to separate into subject areas and not favor integration.

Programs need to be evaluated to identify features that need to be improved. Research pertaining to French immersion as well as program results should be made available to all stake-holders.

Transportation issues should be addressed.

Special education programs need to be developed.

Continued efforts must be made to develop appropriate resources.

Stakeholders must seek strategies to keep programs vibrant.

Participant Recommendations:

- Provide leadership that is convincing about second language acquisition. Ensure that administrators are knowledgeable about French immersion by holding this kind of symposium every two years.
- Raise the profile of French immersion by reinforcing the fact that French immersion programs through the dissemination of research results and visibly celebrating successes. Make it important enough that people want to get involved.
- Promote the idea of Canada's two official languages.
- Have high expectations of immersion teachers.
- Reflect on existing and desirable classroom practices: insist on experiential approaches to teaching and learning, pay more attention to providing comprehensible input, ensure that students use the second language in authentic contexts, emphasize the concept of intrinsic motivation.

- Provide 100% exposure to French in early childhood years of French immersion, delaying the introduction of English Language Arts until Grade 3.

- Empower and inform administrators of the way in which French immersion works and the importance of sufficient exposure to oral second language during the critical years. Administrators can easily observe this feature in French immersion classes.

- Develop and administer a French Language Arts Achievement Test in Grade 2.

    - The emphasis placed on the results of the English Language Arts Achievement Tests in Grade 3 encourages premature introduction of English during the critical period of second language acquisition. There is a need to validate French and to encourage its extensive use in those critical early years. There is a need to counter the effect of the HLAT (Highest Level of Achievement Testing, developed by Edmonton Public) and CTBS (Canadian Test of Basic Skill) English language tests which are administered by many schools.

- Request a modified approach for French immersion with respect to the Early Literacy Project and develop adequate resources.

    - Ensure that teachers have a clear understanding of the importance of teaching reading strategies in French in class in Grade 1 rather than outside class in Grade 2. Teachers should be mentored to be strong advocates of literacy development within their classroom, rather than hiring specialists to work with individual students outside the classroom.

    - Develop adequate resources.

    - Involve Alberta Education in adapting early literacy skills (Reading Recovery) materials.

    - Begin the process of translating materials with a small effort and build on it.

    - Provide teacher training, not just resource development.

- Ensure excellent language models for the classroom by encouraging personal action plans to ensure teachers (both new and practicing teachers) maintain their language competency in French on an on-going basis.

- Engage student teachers and practicing teachers in dialogues about language learning and teaching by including these issues in the syllabus and possibly in the summative evaluation of field experiences. This would ensure that current pedagogical practices are discussed and that student teachers have opportunities to try new approaches, be they related to language development, learning styles or integration of special needs.

French Immersion: The Success Story Told by Research

Nancy D. Halsall, PhD

Edited for the conference *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future*
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Edmonton

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Introduction

French immersion, it has been said by the Canadian Education Association (1992), is the most researched topic of all educational innovations. Although bilingualism and multilingualism occur in many parts of the world, in Canada, French immersion was initially seen as an experiment. The title of the 1983 booklet *The Trial Balloon That Flew* captures the attitude of experimentation toward French immersion. This idea of experimentation is one reason for the extensive research surrounding French immersion. A second reason is that each generation of parents, administrators, and trustees has sought fresh evidence that French immersion works. By "works," people seem to mean that French immersion will do no irreparable harm to students, that the students will learn French, and that their English language skills will not be different from non-immersion students. A third reason is that, as immersion has expanded, students with all levels of ability have entered programs, and researchers have wanted to check whether immersion is suitable for a wide variety of students.

After three decades, the general concerns about whether French immersion works have been amply answered. Other issues remain for further scrutiny.

Acquisition of French Language Skills

Immersion programs vary according to the grade level at which they begin and the amount of time devoted to French during the school day. Early French immersion (EFI) typically begins in kindergarten or Grade 1; late French immersion (LFI) usually begins in Grade 6 or 7, and middle French immersion (MFI) usually begins around Grade 4. High school subjects in French are usually offered to students who have been in immersion in prior grades. The amount of time spent in French varies by grade level, by the grade at which students enter the program, and from province to province and school to school. The range runs from 100% to 50% of time being spent in French. These multitudinous arrangements make studying language acquisition in French immersion complicated, but the abundance of evidence is clear.

When the French acquisition of students in various immersion programs has been compared, the finding has been that the students who have had the largest number of hours in French have had the highest achievement. EFI students do better in French than LFI students, and MFI students fall between the students in the other two programs (Day & Shapson, 1989; Edwards, 1989; Harley, 1987; Hart & Lapkin, 1989; Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1991; Hart, Lapkin, & Swain, 1992; McVey, Bonyun, Dicks, & Dionne, 1990; Swain & Lapkin, 1986; Wesche, 1996). EFI students have been found to have greater speaking ability, greater listening skills, and more confidence in using their French language skills. More consistent levels of performance have been found among EFI students (Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1991).

The French language skills of immersion students are high, but when compared with the skills of students whose first language is French, are below those of Francophones (Genesee, 1978; Holobow, Genesee, Lambert, & Chartrand, 1987; Swain & Lapkin, 1981). The skills that diverge the most are speaking and writing.

A widespread belief is that by the time students reach high school there is no discernible difference between students who have come through the various programs. On the face of it, there is some evidence to support this belief, particularly regarding the receptive skills of listening and reading (Dicks, 1994). However, a clear look at what transpires in immersion programs is warranted (Edwards, 1989).

It is clear that LFI programs are valuable for those who enrol in them and stay in them, but it is important to determine who enrols, what their capabilities are, and whether they remain in the program. EFI is seen as drawing a more diverse range of students than other programs. It is possible that LFI students who continue to take courses in French immersion are more motivated than their peers. It is possible that better teaching strategies can be used in EFI programs. Finally, it is possible that the presence of LFI students in high school classes slows down the progress of EFI students.

English Language Skills of French Immersion Students

A great concern for parents and students has been and continues to be whether students jeopardize the quality of their English language skills by taking French immersion (Halsall, 1997). Much investigation of the issue has been carried out and several summaries of findings have been done (Alberta Education, 1992; Carleton Board of Education, 1994; Edwards, 1989; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Parkin, Morrison, & Watkin, 1987).

Researchers have found that there are some lags in English language skills in students in grades 1 to 3. The lags disappear by Grade 4 or 5, independent of the proportion of English instruction time provided from Grade 3 on (Edwards, 1989).

For MFI students no negative findings have been reported related to English language skills. One group of researchers (Hart, Lapkin, & Swain, 1988) found that EFI students did better than MFI students in reading and vocabulary. This finding was interpreted as indicating that immersion education enhances English skills over the long term.

For LFI students, researchers have found no detriment to English skills (Halpern, MacNab, Kirby, & Tuong, 1976; Shapson & Day, 1982). Recent research on English language skills has confirmed the findings in the 1970s and 1980s (Fine, 1992; Gaudet & Pelletier, 1993; McVey, Bonyun, Dicks, & Dionne, 1990)

Immersion has not been found to be detrimental to intellectual development. In fact, recently researchers have found that some skills, such as the figurative and metaphoric use of language, might be enhanced by second language learning (Neufeld, Arnold, Flaborea, Paterson, & St. Lewis, 1992).

Special Education for Immersion Students

As students with a wider range of ability level than the very first immersion students have entered immersion, particularly EFI, researchers have continued to find favourable

comparisons between the skills of immersion students and their peers in Francophone programs and in English programs (Carleton Board of Education, 1994). Attention has now turned to the issue of whether students with special needs can be served in and benefit from immersion programs. This issue is integrally related to the issue of attrition from immersion programs. Immersion has been found to be suitable for students having academic difficulty and for the learning disabled (Edwards, 1989). Language disability is an impediment to academic achievement, but this has not been found to be more so when students are enrolled in immersion.

Yet the main reasons for the transfer out of immersion continue to be difficulties with academics, language problems, and behavioural problems (Ali Khan, 1993; Kasian, 1993; Stern, 1991; Vedovi, 1992).

Researchers have not concluded that students experiencing difficulties should leave immersion programs, but have encouraged the development of strategies for working with students with special needs within their program (Ali Khan, 1993; Keep, 1993; Wiss, 1989). Interestingly, the call for increased services within immersion has been made by researchers with extensive experience not only in immersion but also in special education (Ali Khan, 1993; Cummins, 1984; Demers, 1994; Halsall, 1994; Keep, 1993; Murtaugh & Dirren, 1992).

The empirical evidence that transferring a student out of immersion leads to success for that student is scant (Carleton Board of Education, 1994; Halsall, 1989, 1994; Kasian, 1993; Lakehead Board of Education, 1990). This practice of removing students from immersion who are referred for assessments cannot be supported on the basis of research. Students who remain in immersion are more likely than students who leave to have parents convinced of the value of immersion and to be devoted to having their children remain in immersion (Demers, 1994; Stern, 1991; Vedovi, 1992).

In Edmonton, the public school district experimented for two years with a self-contained class specifically designed for learning disabled students in French immersion programs. On the basis of the evidence gathered, the program will continue and may expand, according to Rousseau (1998). Although the trend in education is toward integration of students with special needs in regular classrooms along with appropriate programming and support, this experiment in a self-contained setting for French immersion students with learning disabilities will undoubtedly produce information that will be helpful to all immersion teachers.

The matter of the provision of support to special needs students frequently leads to questions regarding the prediction of who will be able to cope and who will do well in French immersion. A very cogent discussion of the issue was provided by Edwards (1989). Briefly, he stated that prediction of success in general, that is, in English, French immersion, or any type of program, while possible for groups of students, is not possible for individuals. Prediction in immersion is not possible, given the current state of knowledge and the measurement instruments available. He cautioned against the overinterpretation of assessment results. Edwards's discussion is based on the work of Cummins (1984), Makin (1984), and Trites (1976, 1977, 1980).

There has been little research on prediction of success in immersion. In one study on stress in the immersion classroom, the researcher found that more students who tested low on coping strategies and resources transferred out of immersion than remained in immersion (Ali Khan, 1993).

Most writing on prediction has focussed on the ways of continuing to serve students in immersion programs rather than removing them.

Attrition/Retention

At the high school level, the reasons given by students, parents, and teachers for attrition in immersion programs have been summarized as:

- a lack of variety of course choices;
- too heavy a workload caused by the demands of immersion;
- the need to choose between immersion and other programs, such as the International Baccalaureate;
- the belief that higher marks for university entrance would be obtained in English;
- a lack of opportunity to practise speaking French, both in and out of school; and
- a poor quality of teaching and courses.

(Calgary Board of Education, 1991; Halsall, 1994; Husum, 1992).

At the elementary level, the reasons given for transfer from immersion have been summarized as:

- difficulty in understanding, speaking, and reading French;
- difficulty in reading English;
- poor relations with the immersion teacher;
- emotional or behavioural problems; and
- lack of remedial help.

(Halsall, 1994; Parkin, Morrison, & Watkin, 1987).

An Alberta Education study (1992) as well as other research (Bennett, Boss, Carlson, & Soucy, 1982) lends support to the belief that students get higher marks when they take exams in English. By policy, Alberta allows students to take diploma exams in English. This is an issue requiring further study and may well be explored in future, as researchers turn their attention to the pedagogy, or teaching/learning aspects, of French immersion programs.

These recommendations for retention at all grade levels have been made:

- that a model be developed for studying attrition,
- that ongoing teacher training be provided in methodology,
- that teacher selection and recruitment be improved,
- that special education programs be developed within immersion,
- that more extensive awareness programs be undertaken, and

- that the contribution of second language learning to the development of multilingual capabilities be emphasized.

(Halsall, 1994; Regina Board of Education, 1992).

Recommendations directed specifically toward high school have been:

- increasing the amount of speaking in classes,
- supporting other ways of maintaining French (e.g., clubs),
- ensuring sufficient materials are available, and
- finding ways to make immersion available at the high school level to non-academic students.

(Carleton Board of Education, 1992).

Much discussion has taken place regarding the blending of EFI and LFI students in high school courses, that is, placing students with different numbers of hours of French instruction together in the same courses. In the early years of immersion this practice was avoided, and is still avoided where the enrolment for courses is large enough to warrant organizing different courses for EFI and LFI students. No well-designed research has been undertaken to answer the question of what effect blending has on the achievement of students. Some evidence regarding blending was found in one school district (Carleton Board of Education, 1992) where more EFI than LFI students studied French throughout their high school careers. It was thought that the practice of blending might contribute to this difference in attrition between EFI and LFI students.

Informal comments of students have indicated that blending creates difficulties for LFI students (Halsall, 1997). As well, a study in which data were collected on the relative skills of EFI and LFI students just before high school entry found sufficient differences among the EFI and LFI students for the researchers to advise that blending should be avoided (Hart, Lapkin, & Swain, 1992).

Pedagogy of Immersion

A criticism that has been levelled at immersion is that it is not and cannot be child centred. The basis of such thinking is that second language teaching must be teacher directed and cannot therefore respond to the interests and needs of individual children. Researchers studying the issue have found that immersion, if designed and carried out along child-centred lines, does not have to be teacher directed. French immersion classrooms can be as child centred as English program classrooms if there is a desire to do that (Halsall & Wall, 1992). This is one example of how research is turning its focus on how language is learned.

A recent bibliography has focused on the instructional, or pedagogical, aspects of immersion (Lyster, 1995). The emphasis on the processes used to impart the French language to students is a departure from the prior emphasis on product, that is, the amount of French learned. In other words, the interest in whether immersion works has been supplanted with an interest in how it works. From the interest in process will come an increased understanding of what

classroom practices will best serve immersion students. A review of the topic has been written by Harley (1998).

Investigation into the pedagogy of immersion will require research designs that extend beyond the traditional quantitative studies. Qualitative designs that describe the learning process and case studies of individual students will be used. Qualitative research has burgeoned in the last two decades and has a methodology of its own. When properly used, qualitative research is every bit as legitimate as research based on statistics.

An example of qualitative research has been provided by Weber and Tardif (1991), who studied kindergarten students by observing them in their classroom as they began to learn French. The researchers found that the students memorized words that were significant to them in the kindergarten context. The students did not appear to be going through any sort of grammatical analysis.

Another issue, which is both pedagogical and administrative, is when to begin the teaching of English in immersion programs. Typically, in EFI, the first years in the program are devoted exclusively to instruction in French. But as more has been understood about how a student's first language supports the learning of a second language, some theorists have called for the inclusion of some English instruction from the outset of the immersion experience. This point of view has been most fully articulated by Cummins (1977, 1986, 1992, 1993) in the context of immigrant children learning English. A good deal of the general public in North America believe, to some extent, that formal learning is best begun in the mother tongue. There is no solid accumulation of research to back up this belief. The immersion experience and the experience in other cultures indeed provide evidence to the contrary. Nevertheless, the issue of when to start English instruction remains unresolved.

Preliminary research findings on the introduction of English illustrate the lack of resolution of the issue. Noonan and Colleaux (1994) studied two groups of students in Saskatoon. One group consisted of students who learned to read English in Grade 1 and French in Grade 2. The other group consisted of students who learned to read French in Grade 1 and English in Grade 2. No differences in either French or English were found between the two groups at the end of Grade 3. Fifteen immersion students in the Calgary Separate School Board had reading and writing in both English (60 minutes) and French. In Grade 1, and to a lesser extent Grade 2, they lagged behind other immersion students who had French reading and writing, but who had only 30 minutes of English. The lag was in both English and French. In English they also lagged behind students in an English class who had only English reading (Bonnar & Cummins, 1993). By Grade 3, the 15 immersion students were reported to outperform both other groups of students in both languages. This finding must be interpreted in light of the small number of students studied, possible differences in teachers, and possible socio-economic status differences (Bonnar & Cummins, 1993). Results of standardized testing must also be taken into account because the average scores of French and English have been above the provincial standard for many years, according to Cécile Bonnar (personal communication, January 24, 1995).

Two additional reports have been issued in Alberta jurisdictions. A report for the Fort McMurray Roman Catholic Separate School District and the St. Albert Protestant Separate School District stated that immersion students with English in Grade 1 did not read as well as students with only French in Grade 1. This statement was based on the finding that by Grade 3, the students with both English and French were a year behind the students with only French, in both English and French. However, all groups read above grade level. The study was unable to identify the reasons for the difference, which could be attributed to a variety of causes (Cadrin & Sawchuk, 1995). Another report from the Greater St. Albert Catholic Regional Division described the results of a three year experiment in which English was introduced in Grade 1. In the judgment of the author, on the basis of teacher-parent questionnaires and test results for students as well as teacher ratings of the students, the performance of the students in French and English was good enough to continue the program (Pinco, 1996).

Thus it is clear that the reports to date do not resolve the issue of when to begin English instruction in French immersion. Large-scale studies in which all the elements that contribute to differences in achievement are controlled would be necessary. It would also be necessary to have groups that do not have English instruction in order to compare the achievement of students in different situations.

The state of knowledge on this issue has been detailed in the report *Introducing English Language Arts in Early French Immersion* (Halsall, 1995). The author of the report concluded it was likely that no one approach would serve all students and that the issue should be reframed as how to meet the needs of individual students within French immersion. Investigating the different learning needs and styles of French immersion students is part of the new directions in research, that of investigating immersion pedagogy.

Beyond High School

Language learning requires ongoing practice, so as large numbers of students began graduating from high school with French skills, researchers have been interested in the experiences of those students in the world of work and in university.

As part of a larger study (Hart, Lapkin, & Swain, 1989), students in Calgary, after they had been out of school for one year, were sent a questionnaire regarding their use of French since high school. Students reported more recent use of speaking and listening skills than of reading and writing skills. Watching television and casual conversation were the situations in which French was most frequently used. Forty percent were taking a course in French. The reason given for not taking a course in French was that none was available. In the same study, a group of students still in high school said they would be trying to get a job in which they would be able to use French.

In Saskatchewan, seven years' worth of high school graduates who had been in immersion programs were contacted (Husum & Bryce, 1991). Eighty percent or more of the graduates reported that they were glad to have been in immersion, that they planned to enrol their

own children in immersion, and that they had had experience with French since leaving high school. Among the graduates 53% felt that, to some degree, French had helped them get a job.

A survey of immersion graduates attending four universities in eastern Ontario (Wesche, 1992) during their years at university and afterward found high levels of French proficiency. The graduates also reported that they expected to use their French in future and had a strong desire to use and improve their capabilities in French.

The Toronto Board of Education (1993) surveyed immersion graduates and found that 53% had studied French at university and had felt very prepared to do so. They watched television; read books, magazines, and newspapers; and spoke with bilingual and Francophone friends in French. EFI graduates spoke with friends in French more often than LFI graduates. Half the graduates who were employed full time said knowing French had helped them in getting a job, and half reported using French on the job.

A survey (Hart, Lapkin, & Swain, 1990) in the greater Toronto area of 34 employers in the area of sales and customer service found that French skills enabled graduates to win an entry-level job, but that future promotion was not likely to be enhanced by the ability to speak French because managers related more to staff who could speak English than to customers who might only speak French. Employers were skeptical that immersion graduates could actually fill the positions that were available, so mock interviews of graduates with staff in charge of evaluating the French language skills of job applicants were conducted. It was concluded that many immersion graduates could indeed fill the jobs requiring the use of French.

Motivations and Attitudes

In addition to getting jobs, students and parents also believe that learning French is an enriching experience in and of itself. As recently as last year, the same results were found in a study conducted in Prince Edward Island (Halsall, 1997). The attitudes of immersion students toward French have generally been found to be positive (Edwards, 1989; Wesche, 1992).

At Grade 8, EFI students have been found to have more confidence than LFI students in using French in real-life situations. At Grade 12, EFI students were still found to be more confident than LFI students (Wesche, 1996).

A change in motivation for enrolling in immersion was found in one study (Toronto Board of Education, 1993). The initial reasons for enrolling were given in this order: learning a second language, future jobs, and challenge or enrichment. Later students moved learning a second language (for reasons of bilingualism and biculturalism) to third place.

Positive parental attitudes and beliefs toward immersion have been found to be instrumental in whether students enter immersion and whether they stay in the program (Edwards, 1989; Halsall, 1997; Olson & Burns, 1983; Stern, 1991; Vedovi, 1992).

Challenges for Immersion Programs

Immersion has been criticized (Bibeau, 1984; Hammerly, 1985; Harley, 1984; Lyster, 1987) because immersion students have difficulty using French in real-life situations and because the students speak a faulty language that is neither correct English nor correct French. Tardif and d'Anglejan (1981) found that the accent of Anglophones hindered communication with Francophones. When reviewing these issues (Edwards, 1989; Lapkin, Swain, & Shapson, 1990), writers have concluded that these are not reasons to abandon immersion programs, but to look for precise modifications to immersion curriculum and pedagogy which will overcome the difficulties encountered. Indeed these concerns, along with other issues, have led to the current research interest in specific classroom practices.

An example of the current research that will inform and alter pedagogy is the work of two researchers (Geva & Clifton, 1994) who compared the progress of good and poor readers in the English program with good and poor readers in the immersion program. The researchers found that good readers in the English program and good readers in the immersion program had similar reading profiles. Good readers, regardless of the language in which they read, showed differences from poor readers on all measures of reading skills. The researchers believed that it was important to determine how appropriate instructional intervention could be systematically applied to increase reading skills in immersion students.

An earlier study (Chmilar, Kendall, & Obadia, 1984) found that there were more differences between students with varying abilities within language programs than there were between immersion and English programs. These researchers, too, concluded that the important intervention was to tailor instruction to the individual needs of students.

A reason that some people give for wanting to begin English in Grade 1 is that students could then receive help in English. Other people feel that the provision of help in French would remove the necessity for reading instruction in two languages simultaneously. Despite this discussion, it is clear that immersion students deserve support in the programs they enrol in. This is not just an issue at the elementary school level, for high school students often report that they do not find the support needed to function well in courses offered in French (Carleton Board of Education, 1992; Halsall, 1994, 1997). How to supply a range of services for the individual needs of students within immersion will be the subject of continued experimentation and research.

High school students do not feel that they get to practise speaking French often enough in class (Carleton Board of Education, 1992; Halsall, 1997). An extensive speaking component is necessary at the high school level. Finding ways to help teachers include speaking in high school courses is a challenge for immersion pedagogy.

Administrative Issues

Historically, it has been thought nearly impossible to determine the costs of programs such as immersion. Reviewing the issue, Edwards (1989) directs interested individuals to

Partlow (1977), Churchill, Orlikow, Greenfield, and Rideout (1979) and Ragsdale (1979) regarding the complexities and futility of costing such programs. However, with the aid of computers, models for costing special education programs have been developed in the United States and Canada. Building on the special education costing models, some work on costing models for French immersion has been done in Canada.

At the behest of trustees, Halsall (Carleton Board of Education, 1994) reviewed the costing of immersion programs by a number of school districts. Among the school districts was Mount Rundle, in Alberta, now part of the Canadian Rockies School District, which in 1992 reported that immersion did not cost more than the regular program and, in fact, improved the overall financial situation. Some districts reported increased costs because of starting immersion programs, higher textbook costs, administrative staff, and transportation. However, most boards found that immersion programs, once established, do not cost more than regular programs. Transportation is the one area where districts reporting no increased costs believed there might be additional costs, but no district reported an actual tallying of additional costs. In fact, it is recognized that immersion programs generate revenue for school districts. After the findings of school districts were reviewed, Halsall drew together experts with diverse backgrounds to brainstorm on the factors influencing the costs of immersion. Ultimately, a preliminary model was proposed as a first step in developing a costing model for immersion (Carleton Board of Education, 1994).

In the early years of immersion, class size in immersion tended to be smaller than regular program class size (Edwards, 1989; MacNab, 1978; Unitt & MacNab, 1977). The perception that class size is smaller in immersion continues today (Carleton Board of Education, 1994; Halsall, 1989, 1997). However, when carefully investigated, the perception does not always appear accurate (Carleton Board of Education, 1994; Halsall, 1997; Sargent, 1994). This is an issue that has not been thoroughly investigated. It is part of the larger issue of the effects on a school system of offering immersion programs.

Ten years ago, in one large school district where more than 50% of kindergarten students enrolled in immersion, the differential effects (Halsall, 1989) of the two programs were investigated. For the regular program, the effects were found to be as follows:

- more multigrade classes,
- streaming at grades 7 and 8,
- the youngest and least experienced teachers assigned to core French,
- possible reduction in staff morale,
- perception of being second best,
- need to accommodate students who had dropped out and students with negative attitudes toward French,
- higher mobility of students, and
- responsibility for a large proportion of exceptional students.

For the immersion program, the effects were found to be difficulty in finding staff, blending of EFI and LFI students in high school courses, vocal parent groups, young teachers at

high school, lack of special education classes, need for programming for gifted students, and a tendency for students to take few courses in French in high school.

Some of the differential impacts on the two programs had eased by 1994. In particular, over the intervening five years, the discrepancy in the number of multigrade classes and in class size lessened. More students were taking courses in French at the high school level (Carleton Board of Education, 1994). Of course, the differential impacts of programs depends on many factors, including the following:

- the size of the school district,
- region of the country,
- linguistic characteristics of the region,
- the availability of staff, and
- whether the region is rural, suburban, or urban.

(Edwards, 1989). The research is clear; offering alternative programs has system repercussions (Lapkin, Swain, & Shapson, 1990).

In the 1980s, rapidly expanding immersion programs taxed the supply of available native French speakers qualified as second language specialists and, at the high school level, qualified to teach specific subject matter (McGillivray, 1984; Nagy & Klaiman, 1985; Obadia, 1984). This was particularly so in rural areas. One survey (Obadia, 1984) found that 25% of immersion teachers did not claim to have native French skills. The displacement of regular program teachers created morale problems (Halsall, 1989; Nagy & Klaiman, 1985; Olson & Burns, 1983). As well, principals felt ill prepared to supervise immersion programs (Edwards, 1989).

The appearance of former immersion students on the job market has eased the situation somewhat. The Canadian Education Association (1992) reported that the situation had improved over a ten year period. In some parts of the country, though, there are still difficulties in staffing immersion programs (Asper, 1990; Fine, 1992). The common notion that the French language skills of teachers do not matter with young students has no basis in the research literature. High school students can be quite vocal about the lack of skills of a teacher unable to function with ease (Halsall, 1997). Principals have become more accustomed to supervising immersion programs, and support has been provided to them through workshops and the sharing of expertise through journal articles (Dagenais, 1990; Kirkland, 1993; Lamarre, 1990; Safty, 1992).

Nevertheless, despite seeming progress in staffing immersion programs, training teachers remains a high priority (Calvé, 1988; Genesee, 1987; Parkin, Morrison, & Watkin, 1987; Swain & Lapkin, 1982; Tardif, 1985). Indeed, teacher education was identified as the highest priority for the 1990s (Lapkin, Swain, & Shapson, 1990). A review of the activities of the 1990s will tell us if this priority has been addressed or has fallen by the wayside, because of reduced budgets.

Many writers, parents, and school personnel have felt that gifted students are bound to do well in immersion. Although immersion programs in and of themselves probably do not meet the criteria designed for gifted programs, the need to foster creativity in gifted students might be met,

at least in part, by immersion programs (Edwards, 1989). Exposure to a second language has been found to enhance creativity and divergent thinking (Edwards, McCarrey, & Fu, 1980; Landry, 1970, 1973, 1974; Neufeld, Arnold, Flaborea, Paterson, & St. Lewis, 1992; Worrall, 1970).

In a 1985 survey of the availability of enrichment in French for immersion students, it was found that it was not provided in most jurisdictions (Canadian Parents for French, 1985). Four years later, Collinson (1989) found that, in comparison with regular program students, gifted French immersion students were disadvantaged in terms of enrichment in French. Teachers have indicated a need for training in recognizing gifted students and providing programs for them (Collinson, 1989).

Some people have questioned the appropriateness of immersion for heritage language students, that is, those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English. After reviewing the issue, Edwards (1989) concluded that there was no research to indicate that immersion was not appropriate for heritage language students. In one study in metropolitan Toronto, the researchers found that heritage language students enrolled in a 50% English-50% French program starting at Grade 5 did well in the program. This was particularly so for students who were literate in their heritage language. Students who were not literate in their heritage language and students who had spoken only English prior to Grade 5 did not do as well as literate heritage language students (Swain, Lapkin, Rowen, & Hart, 1989). In another study it was found that learning French strengthened first language skills (Harley, Hart, & Lapkin, 1986). Studies such as these, and others (Chmilar, Kendall, & Obadia, 1984; Geva & Clifton, 1994), have led to an understanding of the importance of the development of strong literacy skills in students (Lapkin, Swain, & Shapson, 1990), regardless of the program.

Implications for Decision-makers

Decision-makers have a difficult task in resolving issues surrounding immersion in their school districts, for each decision must be made in light of the particular circumstances of the local setting. Research provides some definitive findings, some tentative hints, and some unresolved issues.

What the research does show is that French immersion works. Students do learn French, and the more time they spend in French, the better their skills. Students also learn English. In fact immersion might strengthen English skills, though that is not always the perception. Creativity and divergent thinking may be fostered by bilingualism. Thus decision-makers need not fear that instituting and continuing immersion programs in their district will harm students.

Although we know that there may be some students for whom immersion is inappropriate, with the exception of the severely disabled (such as autistic students), we do not yet have ways of identifying students who will not benefit from immersion. Researchers should be encouraged to continue to find the characteristics of students which enable them to succeed in immersion. This information may come from those interested in psycho-educational assessment or from those exploring teaching/learning practices. Or perhaps understanding may come from

farther afield from education—the new brain research that has already contributed to our understanding of the importance of preschool education.

At any rate, since we do not know who will not benefit from immersion and we do know that support for individuals via special education and remedial resources has proven effective, the prudent strategy would seem to be to provide supports within immersion similar to those in regular programs. It is difficult to see why it would be more costly or problematic to provide resources in one program or another. Special education issues are related to attrition issues.

Many of the reasons for attrition have to do with the quality of immersion programs and the way the programs are structured. For example, the practice of blending students with differing numbers of hours of instruction in French has repeatedly been pointed out as a possible cause of attrition. The French language skills of some teachers and their capability in second language teaching have also been targeted as causes of attrition. Knowing the above, decision-makers should support research that leads to better teacher education and should demand and fund ongoing teacher training for immersion teachers, not omitting high school teachers.

Organizing programs at the high school level has proven a challenge in many school districts. Gathering a sufficient number of students to offer a vibrant program must be weighed against the costs of transportation and students' desires to be with their friends. In this situation, decision-makers must consider whether it is best to provide as much instruction as possible in French prior to high school entry; that is, they must consider the role of EFI in balancing the difficulties of providing high school immersion. At the high school level, the richest possible offering of courses and extracurricular activities in French should be made available.

The question of when to start English language arts is an unresolved one. In fact there may not be one answer to the question. Programs that have been functioning well may not need to be altered. The key is ongoing monitoring of the outcomes of immersion programs. An important consideration is how much time can be taken out of French immersion before the program no longer functions the way it was intended to. Immersion means students are immersed in the language. In the end, a better question might be how best to serve the needs of individual students within immersion programs.

We know that practising a language is an ongoing process and that many high school graduates want to study in French. We know that French is helpful in obtaining employment. Decision-makers can support the aspirations of students by encouraging linkages with institutions of higher learning so that they continue the work that has been started by school districts. Although the research is not clear on gifted French immersion students, special care should be taken that the needs of gifted students are met within immersion.

Nor is the research yet clear on how best to serve heritage language students in immersion. The fact that students have a heritage language might mean that they are in a position to benefit from learning additional languages.

These are some examples of the help that research can provide decision-makers.

Conclusion

This brief review of research findings regarding French immersion illustrates the contribution that research has made over three decades to understanding immersion and the issues surrounding it. Research cannot make the decisions, however. The role of research is to provide information for decision-makers. In the case of immersion, the information tells the story of success.

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Language Learning in French Immersion Classrooms
in the Transition Year: Information for School Administrators

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS DOCUMENT IS

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Poverty and French Immersion Mix

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It was bound to happen, though I didn't see it coming. I'd been working back and forth on studies of poverty and studies of immersion. On both topics I probed the needs and aspirations of the students enrolled in the program and tried to understand what would make the school experience better from the point of view of the students.

Mix of poverty and immersion

One morning in a low-income area of northern Manitoba I was interviewing a group of articulate, mainly aboriginal, students about what they liked, what they didn't like, and what alterations they'd like to see in their school programs. They didn't like the school's discipline system because of being assigned to a noisy room that left them no time to sit quietly and think. And they didn't like it when the teachers went so fast they couldn't understand. They liked gym and thought there should be more time spent on physical activity. "You should have the gym open before and after school," one student said. They liked science because they learned about the real world, which made life more interesting. They liked computer work because people really used those machines.

Then one of the students looked at two others and said, "What's the name of that school we used to be in? You know, the one where we spoke French." "French immersion?" I offered. As details emerged I learned that the three students, all boys, moved around a lot and at one point all three had wound up together in a French-immersion school. They took the French as just one of the peculiarities of that particular school and enjoyed learning another language. They even used it outside school. That was in contrast to the frequent finding in research that students in immersion programs do not use French outside the school setting. The students enjoyed the fact that the other students hadn't mastered French either and believed that made them "sort of equal". They believed that French was a part of real life in the way that science and computers were. "You know, some people speak French," they told me. "And we could use it if we ever went away and met someone who spoke it."

They didn't continue with French because they moved and the next school didn't have the program. I asked why they didn't go to the immersion program in their school system, and the response was that they didn't think there was one. Then realizing that my question implied there was one, they asked me, "Is there one?" I answered honestly but cautiously because I knew that immersion programs generally did not accept students who hadn't been enrolled in immersion continuously. These students, who had enjoyed learning French, who were determined to make their way in life, and who came from very poor families, had stumbled on an experience that made them enthusiastic and made them feel part of the in-group.

In with the in-group

I had encountered those feelings before, in Prince Edward Island, where middle and senior high school students, some from low-income families, had explained their immersion programs to me in writing and in great detail. They had mastered the details of how the program worked, were involved in a real-life experience, were part of the in-group. They knew the words, they spoke the language, and this, they felt to a student, was their ticket to employment. Some would stay on the Island and use their second language in the tourism industry, where 50% of businesses needed bilingual staff. Others would venture forth to other locales, the number of which was enlarged because they spoke French.

Immersion has been called elitist because the children from middle and high socioeconomic stratums are believed to predominate in the program. Burns tagged the issue in the 1980s, and Hart, Lapkin, and Swain have data from Toronto showing a trend for children from higher socioeconomic-status families to predominate in immersion. My observations around Ottawa, where 50% of the students entered immersion, and around Charlottetown lead me to believe that immersion can serve students living in poverty. Students living in poverty should not miss out on the immersion experience,

but to be certain of including them, school districts have to ensure that their policies, practices, and beliefs enable students living in poverty to have access to the immersion experience.

Policies, practices, and beliefs

One belief that prevents students living in poverty from enrolment in immersion is that these students need all the time that can be had to learn English. Yet we know that learning one language can support learning a second language simultaneously. (See the writing of Cummins.in References)

In some programs, as already mentioned, students who've missed a grade or more are encouraged not to try to go back in immersion. Students living in poverty often move around a lot. Yet what an important lesson might be learned by students living in poverty by being behind and catching up.

Immersion programs are not always located in poor neighbourhoods, where they can be accessed by the students living there. And poor people aren't able to drive their children across town to another school.

Many school districts try not to promote one program over another. But for families living on low incomes who might move often, how are parents to know what services are available for their children if they are not advertized? Another problem area is the encouraging of students away from immersion. The purpose of screening programs is laudable. It is to identify special needs of students so that they can be addressed. However, an unwanted and sometimes unanticipated outcome is that students living in poverty often wind up being segregated from better-off students. There is a large body of research showing that students living in poverty do better in mixed environments and that there is no detriment to the students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Screening tests specifically for judging which students will do well in second-language settings must be viewed with skepticism, for often the criteria relate more to tractability than to actual language learning. Even the assumption that students slow to develop auditory skills will be hindered by being in immersion is just that, an assumption, not an empirically supported finding.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my studies of poverty and of immersion and my encounters with students have led me to believe that for students living in poverty another language, whether presented in an immersion or daily-lesson setting, could be an opportunity for engagement in real life which they so value and an opportunity to see themselves as successful. In short, poverty and immersion should mix.

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Conférences à surveiller !

... 5e congrès de l'ACREF à Ottawa Ontario du 18 au 20 octobre 2001
– Thème : *Le temps de lire*

... Congrès de l'APPIPC à Burnaby en C.-B. du 18 au 20 octobre 2001
– Thème : *L'intégration des matières par la technologie*

... Congrès de l'ACPI à Toronto les 9 et 10 novembre 2001
– Thème : *L'immersion : une vision de l'avenir*

Uses and Misuses of Research in School Board Decision-Making: Examples from French Immersion*

Sharon Lapkin

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Introduction

It has long been acknowledged that French immersion education came into existence for social, economic and political reasons, and in some sense, school boards have had to put immersion programs in place with or without actively wanting to. The first program was distinctive in its early reliance on extensive research (Lambert and Tucker, 1972) to monitor student progress, document program outcomes and thereby justify its continued existence.

As immersion has grown, research has continued to serve as a resource for decision-makers (and other consumers, such as parents) and as a rationale for administrative decisions. In this paper I illustrate from my own experience both constructive and destructive uses of immersion research with the help of three concrete examples.

The paper concludes with a plea for a rich, interactive dialogue between decision-makers and researchers. We cannot appreciate the complexity of the issues involved in your policy decisions unless educators fill us in on all relevant contextual variables. Thus the challenge to us, the researchers, is to shape research that is responsive to administrators' and teachers' concerns, and further, having identified appropriate research questions, to make all stages of our work accessible to them.

The first case presented here (Case A) is paradoxical in that it provides findings that may be misused for political purposes and can, at the same time, be used constructively to improve program delivery. Since no definitive action has yet been taken, it is not clear whether the research will have contributed in a constructive fashion to an administrative decision.

Case B, the second example, illustrates a clear misuse of a number of immersion studies to rationalize an administrative decision. And Case C exemplifies the potential of a large-scale study to provide valuable insights for program implementation in a board where conditions differ, but useful inferences can be drawn from the available research.

Often research is used as after-the-fact rationalizing of politically motivated decisions. And although responsible researchers cannot be "bought", all of us have come up against situations where our findings and interpretations are cited to bolster opposing points of view. Also, if we are not totally "in the picture" we can sometimes prove insensitive to local conditions and make unsuitable recommendations.

Case A: the danger of generalizing from one study

In 1990 I was asked to act as a resource person to a subcommittee of trustees and

staff in a board in Northeastern Ontario. In the urban part of the board, immersion had, since its implementation in 1975, been housed in single-track schools, or in what are known as immersion centres. Elsewhere in the board, immersion is found in dual-track schools.

As an author of the only published study of comparative student outcomes in immersion centres and dual-track schools (Lapkin et al., 1981), and as someone familiar with research on immersion, I was asked to respond in an open meeting to committee questions on the issue of the optimal housing of immersion programs. Many of the parents present had a vested interest in maintaining existing immersion centres, and wanted research evidence to support their preference.

The design of the published evaluation carried out a decade ago in the Carleton Board involved testing immersion students at the grade 5 level in immersion centres (6 classes) and dual-track schools (4 classes) in English and French. A survey of staff was also conducted. On two of four French tests (listening and reading comprehension) and on two CTBS subtests (vocabulary and reading comprehension), immersion centre students outperformed students in dual-track schools. There were no other differences in performance.

Questionnaire data indicated that immersion centre students might use more French in out-of-class contexts (e.g. when speaking to teachers other than their homeroom immersion teacher) than students in dual-track schools. There is evidence from questionnaire responses that centre students get more exposure to spoken and written French in the school environment than dual-track counterparts, a fact which may have had an impact on their French listening and reading comprehension scores. Moreover, teachers in centres appeared better satisfied with resources available in their schools, and with their teaching situations overall. (The scope of our study did not include an examination of financial and other resource allocations to the two types of schools. If it is more cost-effective to deliver immersion in centres, this may have had a bearing on reported perceptions that centres had superior resources.)

In interpreting the results we speculated that support for French in the school environment was more pronounced in the centre setting where we found that school corridor displays featured more material in French, assemblies were more likely to be conducted partly in French, administrative and other staff were more likely to be bilingual, and so on. The presence of French outside the classroom walls was palpable, and doubtless had a positive effect on French performance.

To return to the parent meeting mentioned above, those who felt that the existence of their immersion centres might be threatened, were prepared to take this single evaluation as proof positive that centres provide optimal housing for immersion programs. My job was to explain that the results of a study conducted in 1979 (published in 1981) in a large national Capital board, focussing on one grade level only, with no subsequent replication, cannot safely be generalized.

This is not to say that the evaluation did not yield important findings, however. Mainly through the questionnaire data, it identified factors that might be significant in enhancing student achievement in immersion. It suggested that there are various ingredients that can contribute to a recipe for successful implementation, regardless of school organization — encouraging actively the use of French outside the classroom but within the school so that the language is perceived as an authentic means of communication for a social purpose that goes beyond academic learning within the class and pervades the life of the school.

Among the representations made to Board A following the public meeting was a memorandum from schools interested in maintaining current dual-track arrangements and discouraging delivery of immersion programming in centres. They quoted directly from a telephone conversation with a parent in which I reflected that personally, given the choice as a parent, I would prefer (but never expect) to see my own child in a centre, but that she had been for most of her schooling in a dual-track setting that I had found very satisfactory. This kind of personal comment was used by proponents of both sides of the issue, thus conferring on my off-the-cuff parental musings the status of research evidence!

(There is a sobering lesson for researchers here: given the unforeseen power that casual comments can have when the researcher is considered "an authority", what we do in our personal educational choices carries more weight sometimes than what we say about relevant research!)

During the open meeting I was able to point out that although research findings can contribute to decisions about program housing, it is both appropriate and necessary to consider it as one source of evidence along with information about transportation, physical space, staffing and other resources (such as library collections) — all of these having cost implications — as well as information on demographics and social variables such as the perceived value of the community school, and so on.

This first example is meant to illustrate the pressures to generalize and the pitfalls inherent in generalizing from a single study to settings where population demographics and a host of other factors may differ dramatically from the context where the evaluation in question was carried out. Specifically, the pressures to generalize were coming from immersion centre parents who perceived that immersion delivered in a centre setting was superior. The potential pitfall would lie in making the unwarranted generalization that because of a single study, there is a single recipe for success in program delivery. At the same time, there are important lessons to be learned from a carefully designed and executed program evaluation. In the case presented here, it proved valuable for both the board and me to have a public airing of the issue. Where such face-to-face interactions are not possible, the consequences of citing research findings out of context can be quite devastating, as we shall see in the second example.

Case B: a misuse of research

In Case B, the misuse of research played a major role in the phasing out of an early immersion program and its replacement by a middle immersion program (beginning at grade 4). On the face of it, there might be any number of legitimate reasons for a decision to replace one program alternative by another. The fact of the change is not, in itself, upsetting. What is disturbing, however, is to claim to base such a decision on research results which, intentionally or not, are presented in a distorted way.

The full exploration of this case study would likely require a book-length report, so I will consider here only some examples of a school board administration's use of OISE research in a four-part document prepared several years ago by Board B.

Like any good "impact" study, this one addressed administrative, organizational and educational aspects of immersion, as well as the research base for a decision to phase out early immersion in favour of a middle immersion program as already noted. Given the multiplicity of factors involved, such a decision may be warranted, though it is always difficult to remove an established and well-functioning program.

One infers from the presentation of information in the administrator's report, that its author thought it best to emphasize the research component, to demonstrate that in fact the existing early immersion alternative was not producing expected results, and suffered by comparison to the second available immersion alternative, namely, late immersion. By extension, then, it was argued that middle immersion would produce superior results to the existing early immersion program.

Volume 3 of the Board report implies strongly that there is a solid research base favouring middle elementary starting points for immersion. It refers to a landmark study of FSL implementation in an Ontario board conducted by OISE researchers Nagy and Klaiman (1985). Consider Nagy's reaction when he was asked to comment on a presumed first draft of Board B's report. Nagy is cited, in the report, as recommending that middle immersion replace early immersion in Wellington County and responds as follows:

> You are... wrong in reporting my recommendation! In an interim report, I suggested that a delay in the start of immersion would be one way to solve demographic/financial problems caused by early immersion, and that this possibility should be discussed further. My argument was that the educational price (the difference between early and middle immersion outcomes) was reasonable in terms of the problems such a delay would solve. I never argued that middle immersion was better. My final recommendation, based in part on a financial analysis that may not apply outside of Ontario, was that immersion continue with an early start, and that compensatory staffing be provided to the regular program to make up for loss of students, staff, and program flexibility.

In support of the view that early immersion furnishes no better results than programs that begin later, Board B's report quotes at length from a province-wide evaluation of early and late immersion programs commissioned by the New Brunswick Department of Education from the OISE Modern Language Centre and conducted in 1984 (Lapkin and Swain, 1984). The evaluation involved grades 3, 6 and 9 under the terms of reference of the contract, with both early and late immersion programs to be assessed at grade 9.

In summarizing the results, Lapkin and Swain draw attention to the fact that they are consistent with those of other large-scale evaluations of the two program alternatives:

> The salient advantages of the early immersion program relate to French listening skills and the perceived degree of comfort, confidence and ability in French on the part of the students. Clearly, the late immersion program is also successful, producing students who achieve as well as their early immersion counterparts in most skill areas.

The report prepared by Board B presents this information as follows:

> The researchers (namely Lapkin and Swain), who are acknowledged strong supporters of Early Immersion, cited that Early Immersion students tended to use the language much more comfortably and with more confidence than the Late Immersion students. It was curious that this was reported only at the end of grade 9 when Late Immersion students had been exposed to only three years of the language versus Early Immersion who had been exposed to the language for nine years.

The reader will recall that the contract mandate called for assessment at grade 9. Moreover, other studies cited in Board B's report bear out that the pattern of comparative findings we reported for grade 9 persists at grade 12.

On this point, in their Wellington County study, Nagy and Klaiman speculated that differences in French performance between early and middle immersion groups might narrow or disappear by the end of secondary school. Middle immersion programs are, for the most part, not yet "mature" enough for this to be verified empirically. But we can look at accumulating data on this issue from comparative studies of early and late immersion, which suggest that few differences persist in test scores in any of the four skill areas (e.g. Hart and Lapkin, 1990; Hart, Lapkin and Swain, 1989; Wesche, 1988). The only strong and consistent pattern of differences is found on self-assessment measures where early immersion students report higher levels of competence, confidence and comfort in coping with communicative demands in French listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In the New Brunswick study, comparisons were made with out-of-province data where possible (that is, in immersion evaluations using the same testing instruments) and with francophones in Edmundston. From these comparisons, Board B concludes that "the Early Im-

mersion Program is not producing the kinds of results that were initially anticipated or ... comparable with results being obtained in other areas of the country".

In fact the findings relating to these comparisons do not reasonably lead to that conclusion as shown by the following two examples from the results:

Comparative Statement	Comment
- grade 6 early immersion students scored significantly lower than Edmundston francophones in both listening and reading comprehension (Lapkin and Swain, 1984).	- notice that this comparison involves francophones, and we would not expect equivalent performance by early immersion students in these skills until grade 8 (Swain & Lapkin, 1982).
- grade 6 early immersion students in New Brunswick achieve scores in French reading similar to those of Ottawa-Carleton early immersion groups but are somewhat weaker in listening comprehension. In speaking and writing their scores are strikingly similar to Saskatchewan norms (Lapkin and Swain, 1984).	- in one of four skill areas, available comparative data suggest that New Brunswick students may be weaker; in the three other skill areas, levels of performance are similar (notice that the Board B report cited above specifies that their early immersion results were not comparable to those of other Canadian studies).

In spite of a voluminous correspondence initiated by Nagy, Lapkin and Swain, intended to set the record straight on these and other misuses of our research, the best we achieved was to have our correspondence presented to the full Board and therefore formally placed in the public domain.

Case B serves to illustrate the close match between issues that preoccupy decision-makers concerned with immersion program implementation and issues with a long-term research tradition. Program comparisons continue to be necessary because they are multidimensional and in each case, the context has an impact. Thus, over the years we have tried to draw inferences from early and late immersion comparisons for other immersion program alternatives. And as relevant data accumulate, our inferences grow firmer. Thus, although the final word is not in on early and middle comparisons, insights from large-scale evaluations (such as the one presented below in Case C) may help administrators faced with a decision on how best to organize the delivery of two immersion alternatives at the senior elementary or junior high level.

Case C: constructive inferences from a large-scale evaluation

In 1987 we conducted a large-scale evaluation of early and middle immersion programs in the Metropolitan Toronto area. The scope of the evaluation included an examination of the social characteristics of the program populations (Hart, Lapkin and Swain, 1988), but the focus here is on French language outcomes and implications for decision-making. From an administrative point of view, middle immersion is often easier to implement since there are fewer demographic disruptions, and less displacement of regular teaching staff (Nagy and Klaiman, 1985). It is therefore important to determine if there are educational consequences that might influence a board's choice of program. This is particularly relevant for boards implementing immersion for the first time, and choosing among early, middle and late alternatives.

The central research question considered in the "Metro" evaluation is: Are early immersion students more proficient in French than middle immersion students at the end of elementary school (grade 8)? If so, in what ways? What inferences can decision-makers draw from the pattern of results?

The Metropolitan Separate School Board (MSSB) houses a vigourous "middle immersion" or bilingual program beginning at the grade 5 level with fifty percent of instructional time provided in French throughout. This yields a total of just over 2000 instructional hours by the end of grade 8 (though other middle immersion designs allow for accumulating over 3000 hours by the end of grade 8). The early total immersion program discussed here operates in three Metro-area public boards beginning in Kindergarten. Accumulated instructional time in French totals from 5300 to 6040 hours by the end of grade 8, with English language arts being introduced either at grade 3 or grade 4, and approximately fifty percent of instruction in French from grades 5 to 8.

The evaluation involved ten early immersion classes in three public boards and 16 middle immersion classes from the Separate board. We also had access to two classes at a francophone school in Montreal where most students were bilingual, and two classes of unilingual francophones in a Quebec city suburb.

French tests were developed for receptive (listening, reading) and productive (speaking, writing) skill areas. Particular attention was to be paid to listening and speaking skills, areas where prior research (including early and late immersion comparisons) had most consistently found program differences (e.g. Lapkin, 1986; Swain and Lapkin, 1986). In addition, we sought to make the set of tests as communicative as possible while using formats which would allow specification of psychometric characteristics. This involved using real-life materials and providing thematic links between tasks where possible. Finally, the tests had to allow for an initially unknown range of student skill levels, both between and within programs.

Full descriptions of the instruments listed in Figure 1 and the methodology of the evaluation are readily available (Hart, Lapkin and Swain, 1990). For the purposes of this paper a brief summary of the results will suffice.

Overall, early immersion students outperform middle immersion students in varying degrees in all four skill areas (listening, speaking, reading and writing). An important exception to this pattern is the ability to state and support an opinion, where because skills are easily transferred

mersion Program is not producing the kinds of results that were initially anticipated or ... comparable with results being obtained in other areas of the country".

In fact the findings relating to these comparisons do not reasonably lead to that conclusion as shown by the following two examples from the results:

Comparative Statement	Comment
- grade 6 early immersion students scored significantly lower than Edmundston francophones in both listening and reading comprehension (Lapkin and Swain, 1984).	- notice that this comparison involves <u>francophones</u>, and we would not expect equivalent performance by early immersion students in these skills until grade 8 (Swain & Lapkin, 1982).
- grade 6 early immersion students in New Brunswick achieve scores in French reading similar to those of Ottawa-Carleton early immersion groups but are somewhat weaker in listening comprehension. In speaking and writing their scores are strikingly similar to Saskatchewan norms (Lapkin and Swain, 1984).	- in one of four skill areas, available comparative data suggest that New Brunswick students may be weaker; in the three other skill areas, levels of performance are similar (notice that the Board B report cited above specifies that their early immersion results were <u>not</u> comparable to those of other Canadian studies).

In spite of a voluminous correspondence initiated by Nagy, Lapkin and Swain, intended to set the record straight on these and other misuses of our research, the best we achieved was to have our correspondence presented to the full Board and therefore formally placed in the public domain.

Case B serves to illustrate the close match between issues that preoccupy decision-makers concerned with immersion program implementation and issues with a long-term research tradition. Program comparisons continue to be necessary because they are multidimensional and in each case, the context has an impact. Thus, over the years we have tried to draw inferences from early and late immersion comparisons for other immersion program alternatives. And as relevant data accumulate, our inferences grow firmer. Thus, although the final word is not in on early and middle comparisons, insights from large-scale evaluations (such as the one presented below in Case C) may help administrators faced with a decision on how best to organize the delivery of two immersion alternatives at the senior elementary or junior high level.

Case C: constructive inferences from a large-scale evaluation

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from English to French, early and middle immersion students performed equally well. Middle immersion students perform least well in comparison to early immersion on measures of speaking ability. A second type of comparison involved measuring immersion performance in relation to that of francophone peers. In listening and reading comprehension, early immersion performance is closer to francophone standards than middle immersion. In fact, the gap is larger between middle and early immersion than between early immersion and francophones.

Now let us consider program differences in terms of average class scores rather than individual student scores. This has the advantage of revealing the impact of differential class effects. Figures 2 through 7 present visually the range of class average scores by program for selected measures. There is a consistent pattern in the results. In general, the strongest middle immersion class achieves a mean that differs little from that of the strongest early immersion class; in fact in the case of reading comprehension the mean of the strongest middle immersion class exceeds that of the strongest early immersion class (Figure 6). In general, the range of class means for middle immersion is broader than for early immersion.

The information presented in Figures 2 through 7 illustrates graphically an important difference in the pattern of performance among classes in the middle and early immersion programs. Early immersion classes generally produce a "tighter" level of performance, with class averages spanning a relatively restricted range. Middle immersion classes tend to scatter over a broad range of scores, representing a less consistent level of performance.

From these findings, we may conclude that the differences at grade 8 in the linguistic outcomes of early and middle immersion programs are substantial and important. Assuming a desire for homogeneity in second language proficiency levels, we expressed the view in the concluding section of our report that overall, early and middle immersion students could not, for example, reasonably be placed together in blended classrooms at grade 9. This does not mean that the best middle immersion students could not cope with early immersion standards.

Since program design varies widely across Canada, how can such research results feed into decision-making in a meaningful way? Let us consider Case C, that of a board facing a decision about how best to accommodate two immersion alternatives at the senior elementary level. This year one class of early immersion students entered grade 7. Most non-immersion students in the board have been enrolled in an extended-core program from grade 4, intended to enable them to "step up" to late immersion at grade 7 if they wish to do so. Thus they have had 20-minute daily FSL in grades 1 to 3, 40 minutes in grade 4, 60 minutes in grade 5 and 80 minutes in grade 6, yielding a total of 720 accumulated instructional hours in French.

The question I was asked to address last spring at a meeting of principals and supervisory personnel concerned the possibility of blending early immersion and extended-core students opting for late immersion at the grade 7 level. As mentioned above, in the Metro study, we concluded that blending for early immersion students with between 5000 and 6000 instructional hours in French, and middle students with just over 2000 hours would be inappropriate at the grade 9 level.

In Board C, blending would involve early immersion with about 1000 fewer hours than the Metro instance, with "step-up" students having accumulated only 720 instructional hours. The inference is clear: it would simply not be advisable to blend at this level, unless one explicitly were willing to accept classes with much more heterogeneous second language proficiency levels than is typical of early immersion programs. If blending occurred, early immersion parents might well object, while "step-up" or late immersion parents might welcome the infusion of small groups of early immersion students into classes where peer teaching might then be feasible.

In fact, Board C decided against blending; apparently research evidence did play an important role in the decision.

Thus French language outcomes described in the Metro study are relevant to decision-making about immersion program implementation. Results from this large-scale evaluation suggest that middle immersion will yield less consistent levels of performance than early immersion, with middle immersion classes spanning a broader range of scores than early immersion. Thus while the strongest "step-up" students might cope with the demands of a blended class, the majority would likely be left behind. Or, put differently, if the blended class teachers were to "pitch" their teaching to the majority of their students, the early immersion students would indeed be poorly served. Clearly, this constitutes only one piece of information — but one previously unavailable — among others to be taken into account in deciding whether to opt for one program alternative or the other. Social factors, demographic characteristics of particular board populations, and teaching resources must also be taken into consideration (see Lapkin and Swain, 1990).

Conclusion

One of the subtitles in a recent paper on ESL program evaluation by Beretta (1990) reads "Evaluation and Policy Analysis: The Need for Dialogue". I hope the cases presented here strengthen the plea for an increasing dialogue between school board decision-makers and researchers. Researchers will not always say what administrators and trustees want to hear, but research should constitute a prime component among factors that come into play in implementing immersion or any second or heritage language program. Researchers are aware of constraints imposed by other factors on decisions and sympathetic to policy-makers who must often make decisions that are unpalatable to parents, schools or community groups. If we are informed about the full range of

contextual variables, we will be better equipped to shape our research accordingly and interpret results in ways likely to be helpful to practitioners and decision-makers. ❑

*I am grateful to John Bates, Jean Handscombe, Doug Hart, Bob Kennedy, Phil Nagy, Brad Saunders and Merrill Swain for valuable feedback on earlier drafts of this paper. Please note that the references to the board documents have been omitted from the bibliography so that individual boards cannot be identified. Anyone wishing more information on research reported here is invited to contact me.

This paper was presented as a plenary talk for presentation at pre-convention seminar of the Canadian Education Association on September 25, 1990.

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Beretta, A. (1990). The program evaluator: the ESL researcher without portfolio. *Applied Linguistics*, 11(1), 1-15.

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Figure 1: A Summary of French Language Tests and Test Measures

Test	Skill Area	Test Measure
Test de compréhension auditive (TCAC)	listening comprehension	count of correct responses to information questions
sentence repetition	listening comprehension	global score-semantic accuracy
	speaking ability	global score-exact reproduction
		syntactic features
		phonological features
		discursive features (liaisons, syncopes)
		total count of reproduced features
open speaking task	speaking ability	task fulfillment (stating and supporting opinion)
		fluency
test de mots à trouver (TMTC-cloze)	reading comprehension (an integrative test)	count of 'acceptable' responses to deletions in a text
open writing task	writing ability	word count
		task fulfillment (stating and supporting opinion)
		count of non-homophonous spelling and grammar errors
		judgement of 'good writing'

contextual variables, we will be better equipped to shape our research accordingly and interpret results in ways likely to be helpful to practitioners and decision-makers. ❑

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		task fulfillment (stating and supporting opinion)
		count of non-homophonous spelling and grammar errors
		judgement of 'good writing'

Figure 2: TCAC Ranges of Class Mean Scores by Program

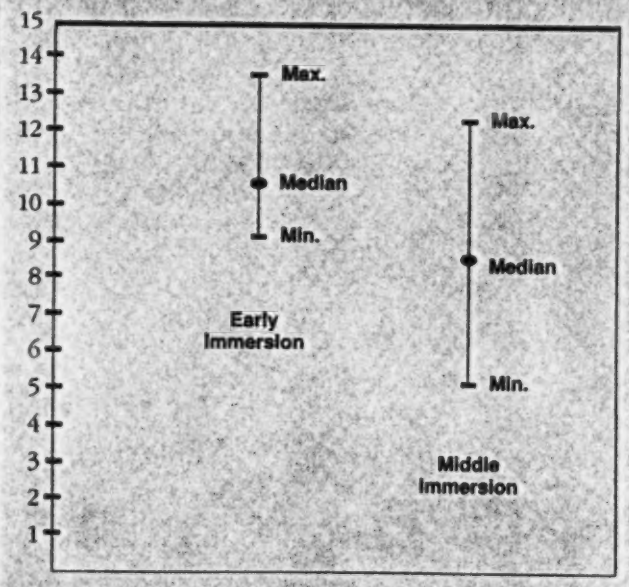


Figure 3: Global Semantic Ranges of Class Mean Scores by Program

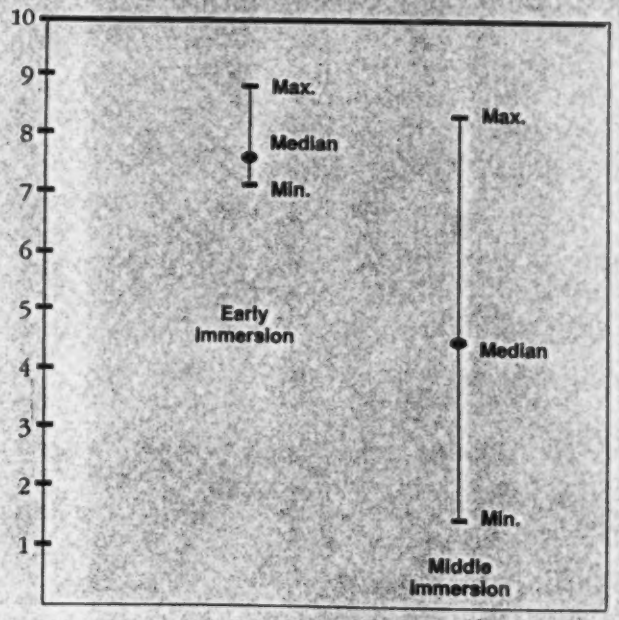


Figure 4: Sentence Repetition Total Features Ranges of Class Mean Scores by Program

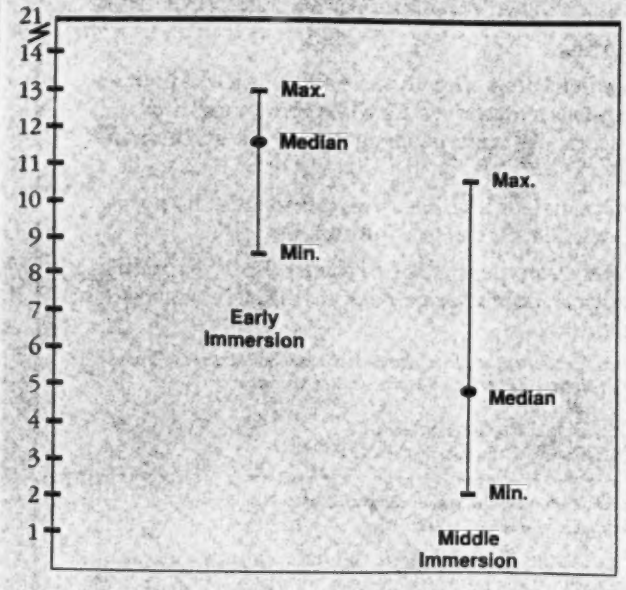


Figure 5: Open Speaking Fluency Rating Ranges of Class Mean Scores by Program

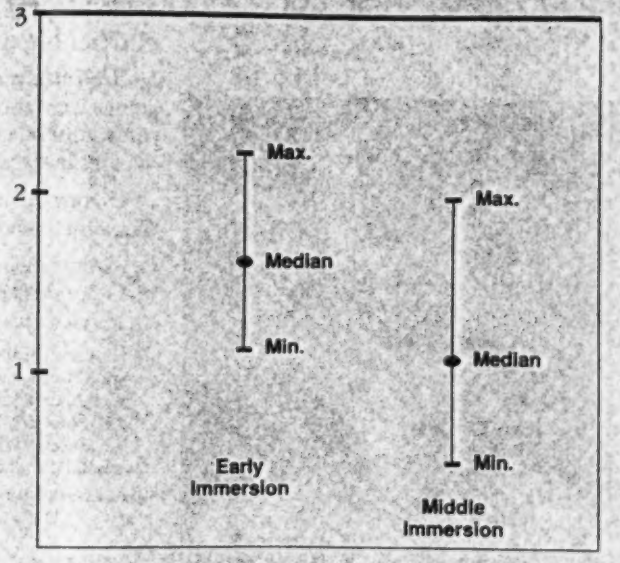


Figure 6: TMTC (Cloze) Ranges of Class Mean Scores by Program

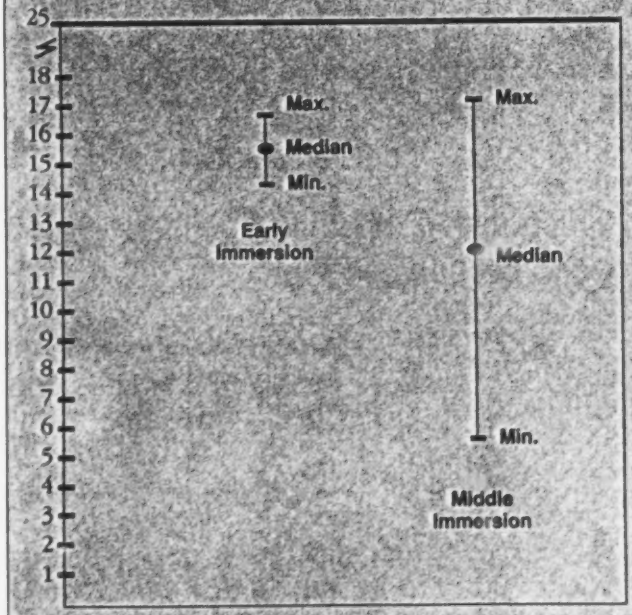
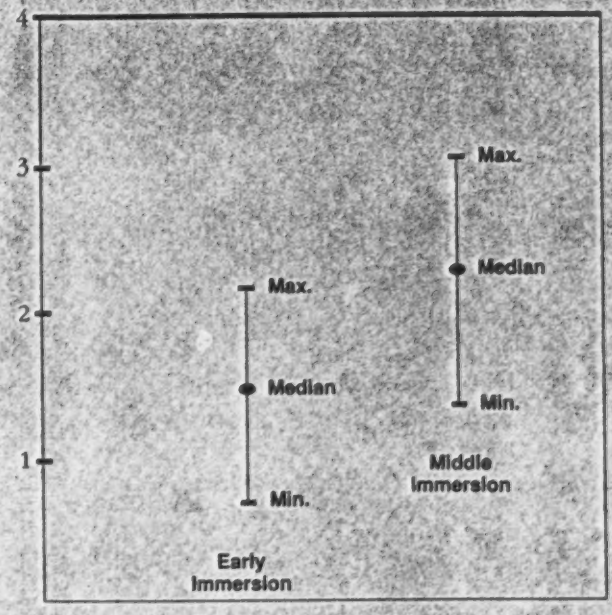
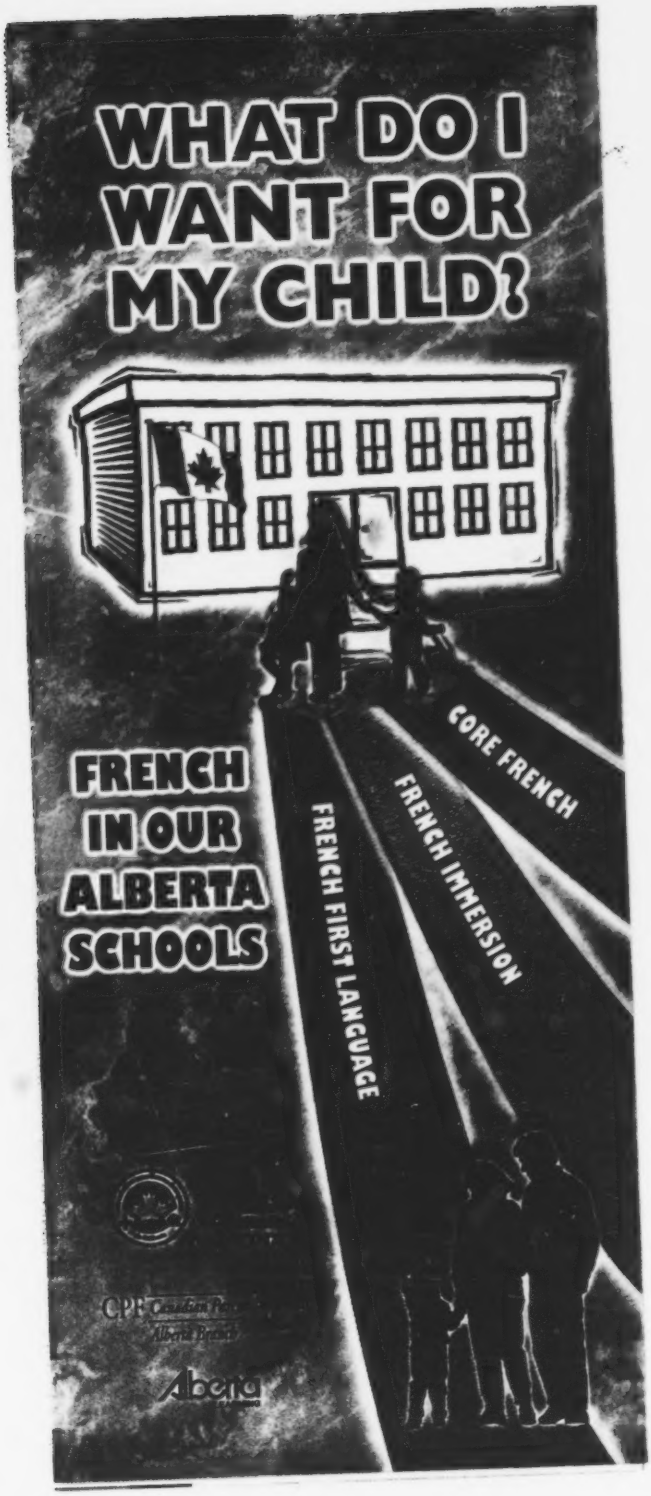


Figure 7: Written Grammatical Errors Ranges of Class Mean Scores by Program




WHAT DO I WANT FOR MY CHILD?
FRENCH IN OUR ALBERTA SCHOOLS
FRENCH FIRST LANGUAGE
FRENCH IMMERSION
CORE FRENCH

FRENCH FIRST LANGUAGE

WHAT DO I WANT MY CHILD TO ACHIEVE?

After completing Grade 12, your child will:

- Have achieved a high proficiency in and a positive attitude towards French as a first language.
- Identify with and be part of the francophone culture and community.
- Have achieved a high proficiency in English.
- Be able to pursue postsecondary education and work in French, in English, or in both languages.
- Be better able to appreciate other languages, cultures and communities throughout Canada and around the world.

WHAT APPROACH IS USED?

- Education is offered entirely in French from Kindergarten through Grade 12.
- School environment, programming and extra-curricular activities provide your child with a solid and dynamic focal point for the French language and francophone culture as an extension of family and community life.
- English Language Arts is introduced in the elementary grades. If your child does not have a good grasp of English, assistance will be provided as required.
- The language of communication between home, school and school board is normally French. For the parent who does not speak French, assistance is provided to help you support your child's learning and school experience.

FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

After completing Grade 12, your child will:

- Have achieved a high proficiency in English.
- Have retained his or her own cultural identity.
- Be functionally fluent in French, that is:
  - Be able to live, work and pursue postsecondary education in French.
  - Have an understanding and appreciation of francophone culture.
- Be better able to appreciate other languages, cultures and communities throughout Canada and around the world.

- French is used as the language of instruction for a significant part of each school day; several or all subjects (except, of course, English Language Arts) are taught in French.
- Begins with a period of concentration on French language development to give students a sufficient understanding of French to:
  - Learn to read.
  - Learn other subjects such as math, science, social studies, the fine arts, etc. taught in French.
- School and extra-curricular activities in French may be used to support the development of language skills and cultural appreciation.
- The language of communication between home and school is English.

After several years, your child will:

- Have a good foundation in French from which to pursue fluency.
- Have gained insights into and an appreciation of francophone culture.
- Be better able to appreciate other languages, cultures and communities throughout Canada and around the world.

- French is taught as a subject. (Alberta Learning recommends 30–40 minutes of instruction per day.)
- French is used as the language of classroom communication.
- French knowledge and skills are developed through the use of themes and projects geared to the interests, maturity, and life experiences of your child.

DID YOU KNOW?

English and French are truly international languages, spoken by an estimated 800 million and 250 million people respectively around the world.

DID YOU KNOW?

language; more than 317,000 Canadian students are in French Immersion and some 1.8 million are in core French.

IS IT FOR MY CHILD?

Intended for a child:

- Of a parent whose first language learned and still understood is French; or
- Of a parent who received primary school instruction in French anywhere in Canada; or
- Whose sibling has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in French anywhere in Canada.
  (as described in Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*)

(And, in the same spirit, for a child of a parent:

- With francophone roots who wants to reintegrate the French language and francophone identity and culture into his or her child's life; or
- Who wants his or her child to retain French language skills and francophone identity and culture [eg. francophone immigrants who are permanent residents of Canada].)

- Designed for a child whose family heritage is other than French.

- Designed for a child whose family heritage is other than French.

DID YOU KNOW?

French and English are the main languages of world diplomacy. • French is an official language of the European Economic Community, the United Nations, and the International Olympic Committee.

AT WHAT GRADE LEVEL CAN MY CHILD BEGIN?

- French first language schools begin in Kindergarten or Grade 1, however eligible students may enter at any grade level.
- If your child speaks little or no French, a variety of programs and strategies will be used to help him or her learn French and integrate the francophone culture into everyday living.

- Many schools offer early French immersion beginning in Kindergarten or Grade 1.
- A few schools also offer late French immersion beginning in Grade 6 or 7.

- In schools where it is offered, core French (often referred to as FSL) usually begins in Grade 4, 7 or 10. Some schools begin as early as Kindergarten or Grade 1.
- In some schools all students study core French at certain grade levels (typically Grades 4-6 or Grades 7-9).

DID YOU KNOW?

First language, of these, some 60,000 live in Alberta. • Nearly 5 million Canadians speak both French and English; of these, some 180,000 live in Alberta.

WHAT ABOUT ENGLISH?

- The Alberta milieu provides ample opportunity for your child to develop his or her English.
- Reading and writing skills are the same in both languages. Once learned, they are easily transferred from one language to the other.
- French first language, French immersion, and core French students take the same English Language Arts program as all other Alberta students, and are expected to achieve the same standards.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

- All subjects taken by French first language, French immersion, and core French students follow the Programs of Study set by Alberta Learning.
- After learning more than one language, your child will have an enhanced ability to learn additional languages.

WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

No doubt you have many more questions than we can answer here! The following parent guides can help. They offer a wealth of information, inspiration, tips, and ideas for supporting your child's French language development. (These guides have been approved by Alberta Learning.)

For French first language...
Tu peux compter sur moi. Guide à l'intention du parent pour l'accompagnement de l'enfant dans son éducation en français langue première.
Available through FPFA. (see next panel)

For French immersion...
Yes, You Can Help! A guide for French immersion parents
Available through LRDC. (see below)

For core French...
French as a Second Language (FSL) Program: A guide for parents
Available through LRDC. (see below)

Learning Resources Distributing Centre (LRDC)
12360 - 142 Street, Edmonton AB T5L 4X9
Phone: 310-0000 toll free and ask to be connected, or in the Edmonton area call 427-5775
Fax: 780-422-9750
Internet: www.lrdc.edc.gov.ab.ca

WHO CAN I TALK TO?

For advice, information, and support from experienced parents and experts, call or visit the following organizations.

For information on what is currently available in your area call or visit your nearest public, separate or francophone school board office.

For information on how to bring French first language, French immersion or core French to your area contact:

CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH, ALBERTA BRANCH (CPF Alberta)

9852A - 33 Avenue, Edmonton AB T6N 1C6
Phone: 1-888-433-6036 or
in the Edmonton area call 433-7311
Fax: 780-433-7306
E-mail: cpfaltaedmonton@cpfalta.ab.ca
Internet: www.cpf.ca

FÉDÉRATION DES PARENTS FRANCOPHONES DE L'ALBERTA (FPFA)

Room 203, 8627 rue Marie-Anne-Gaboury (91 St.),
Edmonton AB T6C 3N1
Phone: 780-468-6934
Fax: 780-469-4799
E-mail: fpfa@francalta.ab.ca
Internet: www.francalta.ab.ca/fpfa

ALBERTA LEARNING, FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES BRANCH

11160 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton AB T5K 0L2
Phone: 310-0000 toll free and ask to be connected, or
in the Edmonton area call 427-2940
Fax: 780-422-1947
E-mail: def@edc.gov.ab.ca
Internet: www.edc.gov.ab.ca

ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE-FRANÇAISE DE L'ALBERTA (ACFA), SECRÉTARIAT PROVINCIAL

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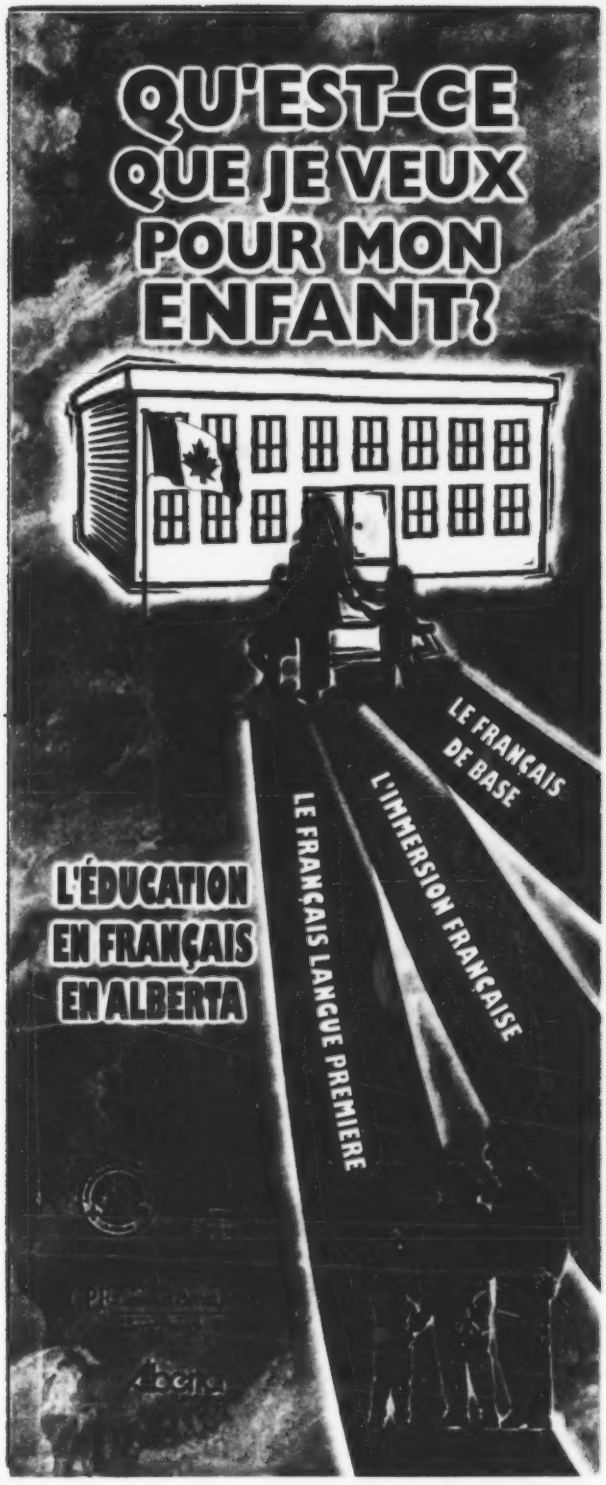
QU'EST-CE QUE JE VEUX POUR MON ENFANT?
LE FRANÇAIS DE BASE
L'IMMERSION FRANÇAISE
LE FRANÇAIS LANGUE PREMIERE
L'ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS EN ALBERTA

LE FRANÇAIS LANGUE PREMIÈRE

QUELS SONT LES BIENFAITS POUR MON ENFANT?

Après avoir complété la douzième année, votre enfant :

- Aura pleinement maîtrisé le français comme langue première et aura une attitude positive envers celle-ci.
- S'identifiera et s'intégrera à la culture et à la communauté francophones.
- Aura acquis une pleine maîtrise de l'anglais.
- Pourra accéder à des études postsecondaires et à un travail en français, en anglais ou dans les deux langues.
- Pourra apprécier davantage les autres langues, cultures et communautés du Canada et du monde entier.

QUELLE EST L'APPROCHE UTILISÉE?

- L'éducation est offerte entièrement en français de la maternelle à la douzième année.
- L'enfant retrouve en l'école un milieu scolaire et parascolaire solide et dynamique où la langue française et la culture francophone sont le prolongement de son foyer et de sa communauté.
- Le cours d'anglais est intégré au niveau primaire. Selon les besoins de l'enfant lors de son apprentissage de l'anglais, il bénéficiera si requis, au moment approprié, d'un programme d'appui.
- La langue de communication entre le foyer, l'école et le conseil scolaire est normalement le français. Le parent ne parlant pas le français peut bénéficier de divers programmes et d'outils mis en place par l'école pour accompagner son enfant dans sa vie scolaire.

LE FRANÇAIS LANGUE SECONDE

Après avoir complété la douzième année, votre enfant :

- Aura acquis une pleine maîtrise de l'anglais.
- Aura maintenu son identité et sa culture.
- Aura acquis une connaissance fonctionnelle du français qui lui permettra de :
  - Accéder à des études postsecondaires, vivre et travailler en français.
  - Acquérir une bonne compréhension et une bonne appréciation de la culture francophone.
- Pourra apprécier davantage les autres langues, cultures et communautés du Canada et du monde entier.

- L'enseignement se fait essentiellement en français. Certaines ou toutes les matières scolaires, à l'exception de l'anglais, sont offertes en français.
- Au début, le français est enseigné de façon intensive pour faire en sorte que l'enfant puisse :
  - Apprendre à lire.
  - Acquérir en français les connaissances reliées aux matières scolaires, entre autres les mathématiques, les sciences, les études sociales, les beaux-arts, etc.
- Des activités scolaires et parascolaires peuvent être offertes en français afin de permettre à l'enfant de développer ses habiletés langagières et son appréciation de la culture.
- La langue de communication entre le foyer et l'école est l'anglais.

LE FRANÇAIS LANGUE ADDITIONNELLE

Après plusieurs années d'études, votre enfant :

- Aura acquis des connaissances de base qui lui permettront de poursuivre l'enrichissement de ses connaissances et de ses habiletés reliées à la langue française.
- Aura appris à connaître et à apprécier la culture francophone.
- Pourra apprécier davantage les autres langues, cultures et communautés du Canada et du monde entier.

- Le français est enseigné comme une matière. (Alberta Learning recommande 30–40 minutes d'enseignement en français par jour.)
- L'enseignement en salle de classe se fait en français.
- L'acquisition du français se fait au moyen de thèmes et de projets portant sur le vécu de votre enfant et ses intérêts personnels.

SAVIEZ-VOUS QUE?

Le français et l'anglais sont des langues véritablement internationales : 800 millions de personnes dans le monde parlent l'anglais et 250 millions de personnes parlent le français.

SAVIEZ-VOUS QUE?

Plus de 156 000 élèves à l'extérieur du Québec sont inscrits en français langue première; plus de 317 000 élèves au Canada sont inscrits en immersion française et 1,8 million en français de base.

EST-CE POUR MON ENFANT?

À l'intention de l'enfant :

- D'un parent dont la première langue apprise et encore comprise est le français; ou
- D'un parent qui a reçu l'enseignement primaire en français au Canada; ou
- Dont un frère ou une sœur reçoit ou a reçu l'enseignement primaire ou secondaire en français au Canada. (Article 23 de la *Charte canadienne des droits et libertés)*

(Et dans l'esprit de l'article 23 de la Charte, à l'intention de l'enfant de parents :

- Dont les origines francophones les disposent à lui faire réintégrer la langue française, l'identité et la culture francophones; ou
- Qui désirent maintenir la compétence linguistique en français et l'identité culturelle francophone chez l'enfant (par exemple, l'enfant d'un parent immigrant et résident permanent du Canada).)

- Conçu pour l'enfant dont le patrimoine familial est autre que le français.

- Conçu pour l'enfant dont le patrimoine familial est autre que le français.

À QUEL NIVEAU SCOLAIRE MON ENFANT PEUT-IL DÉBUTER?

- Votre enfant peut faire son entrée dès la maternelle ou la première année ou à tout autre niveau scolaire.
- Si votre enfant parle peu ou pas le français lors de son entrée à l'école, celui-ci bénéficie de divers programmes et d'outils mis en place par l'école, pour l'aider à apprendre le français et à intégrer la culture francophone.

- Plusieurs écoles offrent le programme d'immersion française à compter de la maternelle ou de la première année.
- Quelques écoles offrent l'immersion à partir de la sixième ou de la septième année.

- En général, l'enseignement du français débute en quatrième, septième ou dixième année. Toutefois, certaines écoles initient cet enseignement au niveau de la maternelle ou de la première année.
- Dans quelques écoles, à certains niveaux scolaires, le français de base est offert à tous les élèves et plus particulièrement de la quatrième à la sixième année ou de la septième à la neuvième année.

SAVIEZ-VOUS QUE?

• Le français et l'anglais sont les langues principales de la diplomatie mondiale. • Le français est une des langues officielles de la Communauté économique européenne, des Nations Unies et du Comité international olympique.

SAVIEZ-VOUS QUE?

maternelle de 6,7 millions de Canadiens, dont 60 000 vivent en Alberta. • Près de 5 millions de Canadiens parlent le français et l'anglais, dont 180 000 vivent en Alberta.

EST-CE QUE MON ENFANT VA APPRENDRE L'ANGLAIS?

- Il est important de retenir que l'influence du milieu anglophone dans lequel votre enfant vit contribue largement à sa maîtrise de l'anglais.
- L'acquisition des apprentissages reliés à la lecture et à l'écriture est la même en français et en anglais. Votre enfant développe et maîtrise ses habiletés en français et les transfère à l'apprentissage de l'anglais et vice-versa.
- Les élèves inscrits en français langue première, en immersion française et en français de base suivent le même programme d'English Language Arts que celui offert aux autres élèves de la province. Comme tous les élèves albertains, on s'attend à ce qu'ils atteignent les mêmes normes.

IL EST IMPORTANT DE RETENIR QUE...

- En français langue première, en immersion française et en français de base, l'enseignement de toutes les matières scolaires est offert à l'élève selon le Programme d'études d'Alberta Learning.
- Lorsqu'un enfant acquiert plus d'une langue, il a une meilleure capacité d'apprendre d'autres langues.

VOUS AVEZ D'AUTRES QUESTIONS?

Ce dépliant ne peut répondre à toutes vos questions concernant l'éducation de votre enfant. Nous vous invitons à consulter les guides suivants conçus à l'intention du parent pour l'accompagnement de votre enfant dans sa vie scolaire. Vous y trouverez des pistes de réflexion, des renseignements et des ressources. (Ces guides sont approuvés par Alberta Learning.)

En éducation française langue première, consulter :
Tu peux compter sur moi. Guide à l'intention du parent pour l'accompagnement de l'enfant dans son éducation en français langue première.
Disponible auprès de la FPFA.

En immersion française, consulter :
Yes, You Can Help! A guide for French immersion parents
Disponible auprès du LRDC.

En français de base, consulter :
French as a Second Language (FSL) Program: A guide for parents
Disponible auprès du LRDC.

Learning Resources Distributing Centre (LRDC)
12360, 142e Rue, Edmonton AB T5L 4X9

Téléphone : Pour obtenir la communication sans frais, composez d'abord le 310-0000, ou dans la région d'Edmonton, composez le 427-5775.
Télécopieur : 780-422-9750
Internet : www.lrdc.edc.gov.ab.ca

POUR PLUS D'INFORMATION

Vous pouvez recevoir des renseignements, des conseils et du soutien auprès de parents et de personnes-ressources d'expérience, en communiquant avec les institutions ou organismes suivants.

Pour des renseignements sur l'éducation en français disponible dans votre région, communiquer avec les dirigeants du conseil scolaire public, séparé ou francophone de votre région.

Pour des renseignements concernant l'accès à une éducation en français langue première, en immersion française ou en français de base dans votre région, communiquer avec les institutions ou organismes suivants :

FÉDÉRATION DES PARENTS FRANCOPHONES DE L'ALBERTA (FPFA)
Bureau 203 - 8627, rue Marie-Anne-Gaboury (91e Rue), Edmonton AB T6C 3N1
Téléphone : 780-468-6934
Télécopieur : 780-469-4799
Courriel : fpfa@francalta.ab.ca
Internet : www.francalta.ab.ca/fpfa

CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH, ALBERTA BRANCH (CPF ALBERTA)
9852A, 33e Avenue, Edmonton AB T6N 1C6
Téléphone : 1-888-433-6036, ou dans la région d'Edmonton, composez le 433-7311
Télécopieur : 780-433-7306
Courriel : cpfaltaedmonton@cpfalta.ab.ca
Internet : www.cpf.ca

DIRECTION DE L'ÉDUCATION FRANÇAISE, ALBERTA LEARNING
11160 avenue Jasper, Edmonton AB T5K 0L2
Téléphone : Pour obtenir la communication sans frais, composez d'abord le 310-0000, ou dans la région d'Edmonton, composez le 427-2940.
Télécopieur : 780-422-1947
Courriel : def@edc.gov.ab.ca
Internet : www.edc.gov.ab.ca/french

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Pour obtenir d'autres dépliants, veuillez communiquer avec les institutions et les organismes provinciaux ci-dessus.

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Appendix B

- Bournot-Trites, Monique, and Ulrike Tallowitz. **"Executive Summary."** *Report of Current Research on the Effect of the Second Language Learning on First Language Literacy Skills.*
  Halifax: The Atlantic Provinces Educational Foundation, 2002.
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- Steel, Victor. **"Re-energizing a French Immersion Program: The Fort McMurray RCSSD Story."** Originally published in a slightly different form in *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report.* Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000.
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- ***When Should English Language Arts be Introduced in the Early French Immersion Program.***
  Nepean: Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers/*Association canadienne des professeurs d'immersion* (CAIT/*ACPI*), n.d.
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This *Executive Summary of the Report of Current Research on the Effect of the Second Language Learning on First Language Literacy Skills* was commissioned by the APEF's committee of French Second Language Curriculum Directors and is reprinted here with permission. The complete report can be found in .pdf format on the APEF website.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Report of Current Research on the Effect of the Second Language Learning on First Language Literacy Skills

By Monique Bournot-Trites, Ph.D. and Ulrike Tallowitz, M.A.

Introduction

The relationship between second language learning and cognitive ability continues to divide opinions. As French immersion is increasingly popular in Canada and other countries, parents, researchers and professionals are asking whether second language learning enhances cognitive development and what are the effects of second language learning on first language literacy skills. In this paper, we present and discuss the results of recent research on the effects of second language learning on first language skills as well as on achievement in non-language domains.

Various contexts of second language learning

Research on the effects of second language learning has been carried out in two main educational contexts: in submersion and transitional bilingual programmes, as for example in the United States, and in immersion programmes, as in Canada. We will concentrate here on the Canadian context. Immersion programmes and Core French programmes in Canada are bilingual programmes where the first language of the students is generally the majority language in the community. In immersion, all or some of the subjects are taught in the second language. In all cases, the L1 (English) is further developed at school, in the family and in other situations outside of the school.

Cummin's hypotheses

Most research on the relationship between L1 and L2 learning makes reference to two hypotheses developed by Cummins. **Cummins (1976)** explains his "threshold hypothesis" as follows: The level of L1 and L2 competence of a student determines if he or she will experience cognitive deficits or benefits from schooling in the second language. **Cummins (1979)** defines the "developmental interdependence hypothesis" saying that when the use of the L1 is promoted by the child's linguistic environment outside the school, then a high level of L2 achievement is also likely to occur at no cost of L1 competence. L1 and L2 literacy skills are seen to be interdependent, i.e., they are manifestations of a "common underlying proficiency." High levels of L1 proficiency help L2 acquisition, and conversely, high proficiency in L2 has positive effect on L1 development.

Effects of learning a second language on first language skills

The question of how second language learning can influence first language literacy skills has been addressed especially in studies on immersion education; a few examples of which are cited here. **Lambert and Tucker (1972)** investigated an early French immersion programme in Montreal (St. Lambert experiment). The goal was to provide English-speaking children with functional competence in both written and spoken French, while at the same time promoting and maintaining normal levels of English development. In grade 1 the immersion students scored significantly lower in English literacy skills. However, this lag disappeared by the end of grade 2 when English instruction had set in. In oral English skills the immersion students did not fall behind at all at any level.

Genesee and Stanley (1976) found no significant differences in English composition between immersion students and English programme students. **Genesee (1979)** reports high correlations between L1 and L2 reading skills, and concludes that this proficiency is most likely transferred from one language to the other.

Swain and Lapkin (1982) carried out immersion studies in Toronto and Ottawa. The results of their longitudinal study showed that whereas the immersion students seemed to have lower literacy skills than the unilingual students in the first two years, these differences disappeared as soon as English Language Arts were officially introduced into the curriculum in grade 3. In grade 5, the immersion students even outperformed the English-only programme students in some aspects of English language skills. These results were confirmed by **Harley, Hart, and Lapkins (1986)**.

In a more recent study, **Reeder, Buntain, and Takakuwa (1999)** examined the effect increased use of French instruction in an early immersion programme in Vancouver, and found that the high amount of instruction in French did not lead to significant differences in English writing skills.

In a report to the Ontario Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), **Hart, and Lapkin (2000)** conducted an evaluation of French immersion education with respect to its effect on English literacy and mathematics. The results showed that grade 3 immersion students performed at a comparable level with English programme students in both reading and writing. By grade 6, immersion students clearly outperformed the regular programme students in all skill areas.

In other parts of the World, the relationship of students' L2 and L1 have been investigated as well. **Verhoeven (1994)** observed Turkish children living in the Netherlands and found that reading abilities showed a strong positive transfer from L1 to L2. In Hong Kong, **Marsh et al. (2000)** compared students who were instructed in Chinese with students who received instruction in English, and found that the achievement of the first language (Chinese) and second language (English) were enhanced through instruction in English. The intensive instruction in a second language did not hinder in any way the development of the first language; on the contrary, it promoted its development.

In conclusion, one can say that the studies generally confirm Cummins" hypotheses. Students in immersion and enrichment programmes reach a "functional bilinguality" in their second language, with no loss in their L1. In fact, L1 competency are usually enriched when compared to control groups who have been schooled in English only.

Effect of learning a second language on non-language domains

Swain and Lapkin (1982) used standardized tests in mathematics and science, and compared the performance of immersion students with that of students in English-only programmes. Early immersion students consistently showed results comparable to the unilingual students.

One study indicates negative effects of instruction in English (second language) on mathematics achievement and other non-language subjects (history, Geography, and Science in the Hong Kong by **Marsh et al.(2000)** mentioned. The authors argue that the programme "was a failure in terms of providing academic benefits for Hong Kong students, as well as supporting predictions based on previous immersion research and Cummins' theory" (p.339). However, the results of this study, even though significant and important, could not be expected to yield results generalisable to the Canadian context, which is quite different. First, this study concerned late immersion starting at the high school level where the threshold of L2 competency needed to achieve benefits from immersion might be much higher than the threshold needed in early immersion (Cummins, 1979). Second, the language achievement level of immersion students relative to that of other students was measured with only written tests and there was no indication of the student's oral fluency (listening and speaking). Third, as the programme was near-universal, with little ESL 'bridging' instruction available to students entering from Chinese language programmes, it is possible that both low initial student proficiency in English and lack of L2 support compromised students' content learning. Finally, the authors indicate that the teachers of nonlanguage subjects may not all have been highly fluent in English. None of the Core French of immersion

programmes in Canada have such negative characteristics. Clearly this study does not change the fact that learning a second language in the Canadian context has positive consequences.

Bournot-Trites and Reeder (2001) addressed parents' concerns about whether their children's achievement in mathematics would not suffer when taught in French instead of in English. When assessed on their math achievement with English tests, the group with high intensity French obtained higher results than the comparison groups. **Turnbull et al. (2000)** and **de Courcy & Burston (2000)** in Australia showed very similar findings.

Conclusion

The effect of learning a second language (e.g. French) on first language skills has been virtually positive in all studies. Although most studies on the effect of second language learning on first language literacy have been done in the area of French immersion education, one can also apply the findings to Core French and intensive French programmes.

The loss of instructional time in English in favour of the second language has never been shown to have negative effects on the achievement of the first language. Cummins' interdependence hypothesis, which maintains that language skills are being transferred from one language to the other, can be assumed to be true for the core French situation as well. One can confidently assume that cognitive abilities acquired in the learning of one language can be put to use in the acquisition and proficiency of the other language. In many studies first language skills were shown to be enhanced, even if instruction time in L1 was reduced in favour of L2 instruction.

Source: <http://www.caslt.org/research/executivesum.htm>. Reprinted with permission.

Re-energizing a French Immersion Program
The Fort McMurray RCSSD Story

VICTOR STEEL
PROGRAMS COORDINATOR, FORT MCMURRAY RCCSD

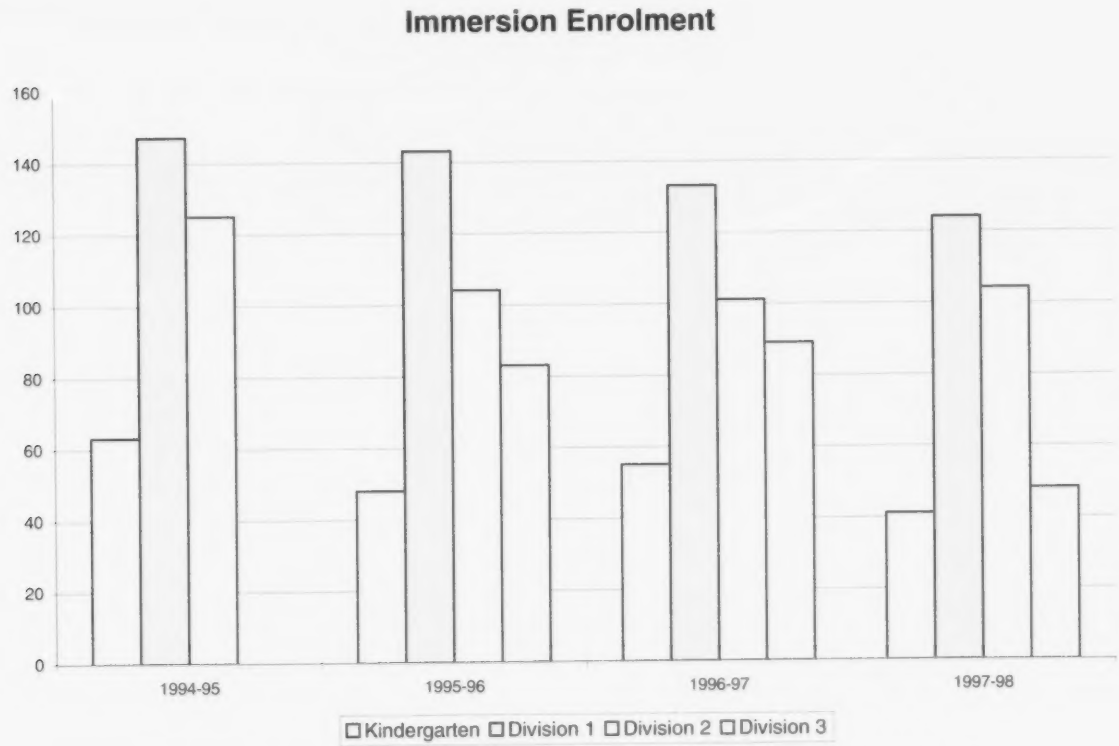
Introductory Remarks

This session is process oriented. A good process is the key to effective re-energizing.

The Wake-up Call

Fort McMurray Roman Catholic Separate School District has offered French immersion since 1980–81. We offer the program in two elementary-junior high schools, and a minimal program in Grade 9 at the senior high school. The parents and teachers of our French immersion program were satisfied; achievement scores were high. After 19 years of French immersion the quality of our program was not the problem.

However, despite our success our wake-up call was the declining number of students in our program. We experienced declining student numbers over the past four years, particularly at the Grade 9 level. For example, in 1997–98 we had 83 Grade 8 students, but only 38 in Grade 9.



Note: In 1994-95 Division 3 students were counted in with the Francophone students.

* Originally published in a slightly different form in *French Immersion in Alberta. Building the Future: Leading the Way, Conference Report 2000*, pp 241–252

In November 1998, a team of administrators from our district attended the first *Building the Future Conference*, at which administrators from around the province were addressing similar declining trends. Following this conference, our team met with Richard Slevinsky of French Language Services, Alberta Learning to discuss plans to address this attrition. Following this meeting our team, which included our superintendent by the way, began work on a four-part initiative to revitalize the French immersion program in Fort McMurray Catholic Schools.

The following description accounts for the process and decisions of our revitalization process.

Setting a Context

Geographic context

Geography affects the sociology of a city.

The physical geography of Fort McMurray is such that communities/suburbs are separated by river valleys and highways. We are a one-industry town of relative wealth and high expectations. Our population of some 43,000 is young and transient. Most parents have had a mixed school experience. Many children we teach were born elsewhere.

Historical context

Our Catholic district and the public district are approximately the same size and we have a history of competition. The public board offers French immersion in one centre, but no high school program. We offer French immersion to Grade 10 in three centres.

The Sociological Context

I want to tell you a little bit about the sociology of our district, but first a comment about the expectation of parents. Expectations are very high in our district and we encourage it. We want our parents to have high expectations. They do as citizens and they do as workers. People come to our town with high expectations. It's all part of the ethos of Fort McMurray.

Part of this case study is the sociological context: the people. In 1990 the Catholic Board of Education authorized administration to study the feasibility and desirability of delivering the French immersion program in a French immersion centre K–9. The study was done during the 1990/91 school year; in 1991 the results were presented to the board.

Victor Steel

But we need to keep certain sociological and psychological aspects in mind. Fort McMurray has no traditions. If you want to do something, do it. Try it. The average age of the teaching population in Fort McMurray when I arrived in 1981 was 25 years old. If you saw people walking down the street with white hair, they were visiting grandparents. They were not residents. You knew that. And every family was really one generational. Parents and their children. Or just adults, because there was a huge population of single people. In the early 1990s, probably 75 percent of our students were not born in Fort McMurray and probably not in Alberta. The population in Fort McMurray grew from 800 in 1958 to nearly 40,000 in 1978. So everybody was young. Now think of the consequences of this for the experience level of French immersion teachers or any teachers. Two, three years in the city denoted a veteran! Turnover was constant with many teachers putting in their two years to get their permanence, then moving to central and southern Alberta.

That can be an asset as well as a liability. The liability is obvious in terms of just gelling and having consistencies within programs. The asset was that we could change who we were within two years. There was no tradition. You could do just about anything you wanted. Consequently it was a dynamic and changing community.

Let's look at the feasibility study and you'll get a better idea of the people we're dealing with here. The report deals with some key elements: Getting a handle on the program. The advantages, disadvantages of the French immersion centre. Where it was going to be housed. The economic perspectives. The public reaction to the concept. The options available for future growth. Insights into French immersion centres. This last was researched and there are some references there about what data was looked at for French immersion centres. And then, of course, the merits. If you would just take a few moments to read through the merits of a French immersion centre (please see Attachment). Notice that under program quality and organizational logistics there are only two disadvantages as opposed to six advantages. So you think. "Wow! It is obvious what we are going to do. Isn't it?" By the time you get to page 19, you realize there are far fewer disadvantages than there are advantages.

The report includes a summary of public input. You'd likely find that you've had this discussion in your district. Parents have the same concerns everywhere:

- Not being close to your own community so that if a child gets sick or needs a parent, they are far away
- Programs in existing schools are very high quality
- Too much time on buses
- Travelling on the bus in the dark and in very cold temperatures
- Why not move the program to St. Paul school, because that's in the growth area.
- The segregation aspect
- Parents believe the board has already decided

At the time, 1990, we were an extremely wealthy board, and that played a role. That's no longer true due to the changes to provincial equalization of school funding. But, at the time, it was an important factor.

What did the study conclude? The population projections were off, of course. In a one-industry, resource-based community dependent on oil prices, nobody knows whose coming and who's not coming. In fact, we are in that situation again right now, with a third oil sands plant having been promised. Nobody knows numbers for sure. I know you all go through the numbers game every September, but we go through it in spades! Yet the conclusion of the consultants' report was to go with the French immersion centre. But there was the back door clause, recommendation #4. That is, "Based on the results of the second round of information meetings and analysis of the data contained in this report, the board should determine whether to proceed in September '92 with the implementation of the major recommendation of the report (that is, a French immersion centre); or maintain the status quo for another three to five more years and re-evaluate the issue at that time."

What did they do? In 1992 the Catholic Board of Education agreed to maintain the status quo for three to five years. It was tough, but it may have been the wisest decision, because the indications were that if we went to a centre the enrolment in the French immersion program would have dropped.

Decisions

Now a brief overview of our revitalization project. The four elements of the revitalization plan are: expansion, maintenance, communication and professional development—a four-pronged approach to solving our problem. Nothing profound.

Expansion of the French immersion program involves offering courses at Father Mercredi that allow students the opportunity to take 25% of their high school credits in the French language. Students would have French language instruction in high school Language Arts and Social Studies beginning in September 1999. We expanded at the Grade 9 level to four core subjects taught in French in the French immersion program. Students said they would stay with the program and they did.

Maintenance of the present (and past) programs of instruction in the French language from Kindergarten to Grade 8 at St. Paul's School and Father Beauregard School is essential, as is restoring the French immersion program, with four core subjects, at Father Mercredi School for Grade 9 for September 1999. Maintenance: there's that continuity again. A new element in our community, considering so much change is always happening. Nevertheless, what we're promising is that we are going to maintain those programs in the neighbourhood schools, as the parents asked.

Communication of what French immersion programs do for students and their education, along with the commitment that this school district has to revitalizing their programming, is important. Elements such as district policy, teacher recruitment, student incentives, staff responsibility and parental involvement to promote the benefits would all need to be articulated in a formal strategic plan. Communication is a continuing effort—we're trying to change the perspective that it's not an elitist program.

Professional development opportunities need to support the expansion and revitalization initiatives and should be in place at the same time as program changes, in this case September 1999. That was the last and biggest part of the puzzle, the professional development of our

teachers. Remember I said that the ethos of our teaching staff was two years in, get your permanence certificate, go teach in Calgary? Professional development of teaching staff and the resulting program stability has helped the confidence of parents. To be able to keep teachers for three and more years shows them that this is a good program.

How do we handle the financing of all of this and who decides? We are very decentralized. All of the money flows through our central office to the schools. Site-based decision-making is alive and well in Fort McMurray. We're allowed, in Alberta, to use up to 4% of funding for district administration. We have never used the full 4%. So even some of these funds go to the schools. Now that doesn't mean that we have oodles of money. But we've been able to maintain programs with small numbers, because all the money that is available is passed directly to the schools. Our central administration consists of our Secretary-Treasurer, my superintendent and me. That's it. Now we have a religious coordinator and a technology person, but those are paid by shared services, which is the money allocated directly to the schools. It is not top heavy at all. So the decisions at the high school, for example, were made by the principal of the high school. He promised that he would reshuffle the books and try to support these programs no matter how small the numbers were for the next three years, to see if we could turn it around.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the decision to maintain the French immersion program in our district as three small programs at three schools rather than at one large centre is based on respecting the context of our city's geography, sociology and our shareholder's long standing expectations of the school system. Despite the economic advantages for putting it into one centre, we have realized other advantages for maintaining a more diversified approach for delivering French immersion throughout our school district.

Facilitator: Dr. Art Schwartz, University of Calgary

The next portion of the workshop involved a facilitated exploration by delegates of the implications for practice in their own schools and districts. The result was the identification of the following learnings:

1. French immersion is a proven success. Let's build on that success and advocate that success.

   Rationale: A track record of success proves better than anything else that it can be done.

2. Involve all partners in ways that value and recognize their long-term concerns and commitment (12 years for parents).

   Rationale: Recognition provides the rewards that sustain commitment, and that keep people working.

3. Cultivate strong, knowledgeable and comfortable moral and financial commitments at all levels of government, district and school administration.

Rationale: The support of both elected and employed officials is most dependable when it is given freely because people believe in French immersion, rather than because they feel pressured or compelled. We should be working to establish and sustain that belief.

ATTACHMENT

Excerpts from Western Management Consultants' Report to the Fort McMurray Catholic Board of Education

E. Analysis of the Merits of the French Immersion Centre Concept

This section of the report summarizes the major program quality, operational, social/political and economic advantages and disadvantages of the French Immersion Centre concept in general. It does not address the implications of specific locations. That task is completed in Section F of the report.

Program Quality

Advantages:

1. Everything in the French Immersion Centre is designed to serve the immersion program. As a result, the degree of immersion in the French language and culture is greater.

2. Students in French Immersion Centres demonstrate superior performance compared with their dual or triple track counter parts on several French and English language skill acquisition measures.

3. Student retention in French Immersion programs is greater than in alternate structures (i.e., fewer drop outs).

4. Locating all French Immersion programming in one school facilitates a more coordinated approach to program development, delivery and evaluation.

   Elimination of the duplication of library materials and instructional resources improves the quality of the French Immersion library and the breadth of available instructional resources.

6. At present many French Immersion students are required to attend their K through grade six program with the same class, since small numbers in each grade do not allow the formation of more than 1 class at each grade level. An amalgamated program would increase the number of students at each grade thus allowing students to experience a greater variety of classmates during their elementary program.

Disadvantages:

1. Since the French Immersion enrollment at the junior high level is usually smaller, junior high students have more limited opportunities for social interaction with students their age.

2. Segregating the French Immersion and English programs may be viewed as detracting from cultural tolerance and understanding.

Operational Logistics

Advantages:

There is more effective and efficient utilization of instructional resources.

2. Larger enrollments permit the reduction of the number of split grades in both the French Immersion and English programs.

3. More efficient deployment of teaching and administrative staff results in some staff reductions.

4. Organizing both French and English programs is made easier in that:

   class sizes are usually more consistent;

   scheduling and time tabling is usually easier.

5. Staff recruitment challenges associated with the French Immersion program are reduced in that only one set of bilingual administrators, one counsellor, one librarian, etc., are required.

6. Providing high quality, focussed and relevant teacher in-service training is much easier since all French Immersion program staff are in one school.

Disadvantages:

A larger number of French Immersion students usually have to be bused out of their neighborhood.

2. There are limited options for teachers wishing to have an opportunity to work in another school.

Social/Political

Advantages:

1 Forming an Immersion Centre is a long-term commitment to the French Immersion program by the Board.

Disadvantages:

1. Parental reaction to increasing the number of students transported out of their home neighborhood will likely be negative.

2. There is potential for backlash from English program parents who may view the formation of an immersion centre as giving French Immersion program special treatment.

3. There is potential to create disharmony between English and French Immersior program parents and students.

Economic

Advantages

1. Increased efficiency occurs as a result of reduced duplication of resources.

2. Increased efficiency occurs as a result of reductions in staff.

3. Increased efficiency occurs as a result of improved program coordinatior organization and staff in-service.

Disadvantages:

1. There are potential increases in transportation costs depending upon location.

2. There is potential to lose students and revenue as a result of parents not supporting the concept.

Summary

A review of current research literature, combined with the expert opinions of Alberta Education second language consultants suggests that the French Immersion Centre concept offers some significant advantages from a program quality standpoint. In addition, there are a number of significant operational advantages and economic benefits to implementing the concept.

The major disadvantages relate to the potential increase in the number of students being transported out of their home communities, negative public reaction to the disruption of schools and programs that are viewed as "working well", and the potential for the development of an Immersion Centre to have a negative affect with respect to the integration of the French and English cultures.

To completely understand the magnitude of the program, operational and economic implications of implementing the French Immersion Centre concept in the Fort McMurray Catholic School District, it is necessary to do a detailed analysis of the implications relative to potential locations. The next section of this report addresses this task. Please note that relative advantages and disadvantages identified in this section apply to all of the options discussed in the next section as well as the location-specific implications delineated.

When Should English Language Arts be Introduced in the Early French Immersion Program?

No final answer to the question of when English should be introduced in Early French Immersion programs exists as yet. The evidence that can be brought to bear on the issue thus far is limited.

Research Not Definitive

Variety characterizes the program structure of early French immersion in Canada, particularly in the area of the introduction of English language arts. Although there has been much discussion, there has been little empirical research on the topic of when it is best for the students in these early years to be taught literacy skills in English.

The introduction of early French immersion in the 1970s inspired an interest in the sequence of teaching reading in English and in French in a few researchers whose studies were for the most part inconclusive. After that, the great bulk of research was focused on demonstrating that both the English and French skills of students remaining in immersion were satisfactory. Recently a new interest in the topic of the introduction of English has emerged and a few researchers are again investigating how different sequence combinations of learning to read affect the skills, motivation, and retention of students in French immersion programs.

It should not be surprising that there is not conclusive research evidence regarding the introduction of English language arts in early French immersion. Cummins and Swain (1986) have described the complex interaction of variables in bilingual education settings. In such a complex environment, many years of gathering information are necessary before the field can be adequately mapped to enable specific decisions to be made based on theory. Indeed, Clark (1994) recognized the need for continued seeking out of information in his call for caution and debate.

This interest in introducing English reading in Grade 1 of the French immersion program is based on the ideas that students will read in English more easily, will transfer learning across languages, will be more confident and will be able to move to an English program more easily.

Sufficient Exposure to French

For others the concerns are whether the amount of time taken from the French instruction will interfere with proficiency in French and how much negative impact the teaching of English will have on the French immersion environment.

Few conclusive studies have been found that identified a threshold level of number of hours that could be taken from French instruction before harm is done to proficiency, although The Modern Language Centre at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education has in their scoring service data that suggests there may be

a threshold of instructional time necessary to achieve measurable progress in French (Hart & Lapkin, in preparation). In any French immersion program it is important to monitor and try to control the informal English that interrupts the immersion aspects of the school experience.

Reading and the Transfer of Skills

There is some suggestion that anglophone students have a more positive attitude to reading in English. This has been used in arguments for and against introducing English language arts in Grade 1. Many studies have found evidence of transfer of reading skills from any one language to another. There is no bank of data that shows that transfer happens more efficiently or quickly either from French to English or from English to French in the early primary grades. Several studies suggest that the language of instruction is not as important as the tailoring of the instruction to the level at which the student is reading.

Program Structures Vary

Four approaches for introducing English language arts in early French immersion are evident in the practices of Canadian school boards.

Approach 1: Teach formal reading in French in Grade 1 and delay English language arts instruction until Grade 2, 3, or 4.

This approach is the most popular across Canada. The majority of school boards in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland/Labrador start teaching French immersion students to read in the second language first. Academic achievement and French and English proficiency results have been more than satisfactory according to board standards as shown repeatedly in board reports. Some recent examples of such reports are those by Fine (1992), Gaudet and Pelletier (1993), and Alberta Education (1992).

Approach 2: Teach formal English reading and informal French language arts in Grade 1 with formal French reading introduced in Grade 2.

Manitoba has been teaching English language arts in Grade 1 for 10 years. Manitoba has dealt with transference (learning processes applied from one situation to another) and interference (hindrance in performance due to application of a process not suitable to the situation) in their English language arts curriculum by identifying and listing transferences and interferences so teachers can capitalize on transferences and recognize and correct interferences.

In a Saskatoon, Saskatchewan study, Noonan and Colleaux (1994) compared Grade 1 early French immersion students who had been introduced to English language arts in Grade 1 with those who had begun in Grade 2. They found that when tested at the end of Grade 3 there were no differences in the vocabulary, spelling and reading tests of the Canadian Test of Basic Skills in English and the word recognition , reading and spelling tests of the Test Diagnostique de Lecture in French. As a result of the study, the board decided not to mandate one option or the other. Schools can choose the program that suits them. This approach has also been used in at least two Ontario boards.

Approach 3: Concurrent learning to read.

The Calgary Separate School Board introduces both French reading and English reading in Grade 1. The regular French immersion Grade 1 program includes one hour a day of English instruction. There are 30 minutes a day in religion and 30 minutes a day in English language arts with a focus on reading and writing. These practices were put in place in 1993 after a three-year pilot study. A group of 15 students that received an hour a day of English language arts started off slowly in the two languages but by the end of Grade 2 out performed other students. Caution must be used in generalizing from this small group.

The Fort McMurray Separate Board in Alberta and St. Albert Catholic Board in Alberta both implemented a concurrent reading program in Grade 1 and both boards are conducting a longitudinal study of the effects and results. The Fort McMurray study will be finished at the end of 1995. The St. Albert final report will be ready for publication in June, 1996.

The English outcomes of the half English and half French program of the Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board were evaluated in the early 1980s. At that time it was found that the program was not detrimental to English language arts.

Approach 4: Teach reading in French first with informal language development in English oral and listening skills.

The Calgary Catholic Board had this approach until 1993. Until 1993, except for an experimental class from 1989 to 1992, there were 30 minutes of English language arts oral and listening skills in Grade 1. The results of this board's annual standardized testing in French and English have been above the provincial standard for many years. After conducting a pilot study the board changed their program to that of approach 3, in which students were taught to read concurrently.

Remediation for Immersion Students

For those who are concerned about progress and attrition of students in the early French immersion program there is the question of how to help students having difficulty. Remedial help in French is not always available in school boards. Many professionals have called for improved service in this area. The lack of remedial services has led some to believe that English language arts in Grade 1 could have a positive effect on retention of students because students would learn to read faster in English and transfer their skills to French. On the other hand, some see remedial services as replacing the need for English language arts in the Grade 1 immersion program.

It may be that different sequences of the language used in learning to read suit different types of learners. Without research to illuminate this idea, a school board may need to explore what will benefit its students through pilot projects. In committing to such an endeavour, it is wise for a board to be aware of as many aspects of the issue as possible including communication, publicity, curriculum adaptation, resources, inservice, staffing, budget, monitoring the impact of the proposed change, and teacher training.

Conclusions

More empirical studies are needed; however, the existing research literature points to the conclusion that no one approach will best meet the needs of each individual student. School boards

faced with making policy decisions might best provide the greatest flexibility possible given their circumstances. Importantly, in the decision-making process, the creation of the immersion environment can not be overlooked for its contribution to motivating young students to communicate in French, which is the primary goal of the French immersion program. Therefore, the number of hours of instruction in French and the amount of English impinging on the program need to be weighed very carefully. It is important to keep in mind that there is a large body of research demonstrating that for students who heretofore have typified the population and have remained in immersion, there is no harm to English language skills.

The full report *Introducing English Language Arts in Early French Immersion* by Dr. Nancy Halsall and Elaine O'Reilly is available from the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, 72 Robertson, P.O. Box 26148, Nepean, Ontario K2H 5Y8, telephone 613-727-6933, fax 613-727-8937.

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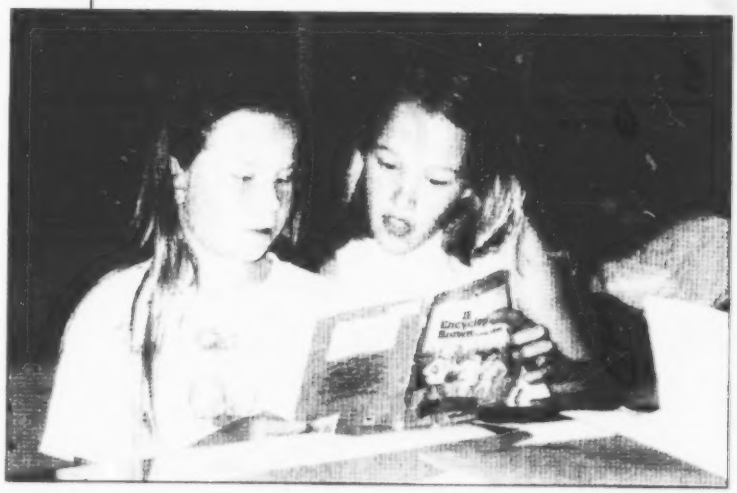

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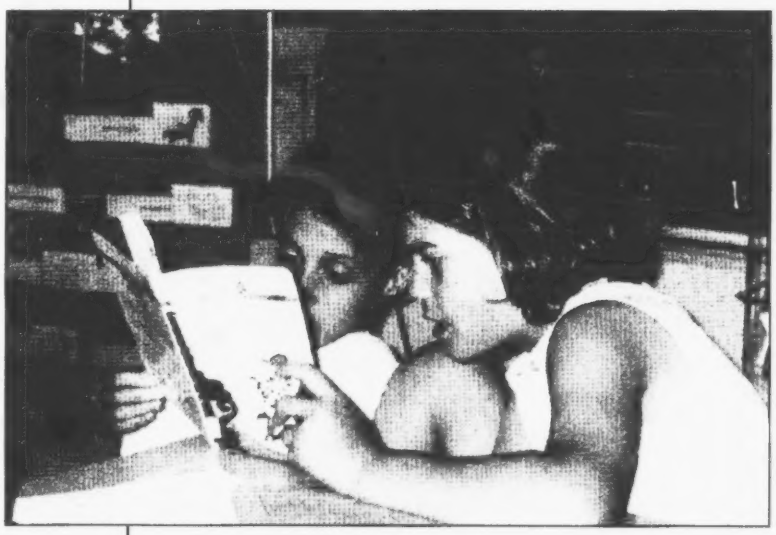

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Appendix C

- Brackenbury, Jim. **"Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams: Results and Implications for French Immersion Programs."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report.* Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000.
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Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams Results and Implications for French Immersion Programs

Jim Brackenbury
Director, Learner Assessment Branch, Alberta Learning

The following is an edited transcript of the presentation(s) and includes relevant overheads and handouts where available. This material has been reviewed and approved by presenter(s) for publication.

I will begin with a brief overview of the provincial achievement testing program and diploma examinations program.

Alberta has had quite a comprehensive provincial assessment program in place for a number of years. We have a diploma examinations program at the Grade 12 level consisting of government exams in eleven different courses. The mark on those exams counts as 50% of a student's final mark in each of these courses. As you will appreciate, this program is perceived by students and teachers as a very high-stakes testing program. It definitely affects the individual futures of the students involved. So everybody takes the diploma examinations program quite seriously. Most of the exams are written in English, but we do have French translations of the math, sciences and social studies exams that students may write in French (please see box). Immersion students may choose to write in French or English. We also have Français 30 that is its own program and exam, the equivalent of English 30. While this course and exam are designed and intended for francophone students, we have French immersion students challenging the exam each year. We are now developing a French

Translating Diploma Exams and Achievement Tests

Once a test is set in English, it is translated into French. We work very closely with our French Language Services Branch staff to validate it. We bring in a committee of French teachers to give us the classroom validation, that is things like whether or not the vocabulary works in a real Grade 6 classroom. Quite often, if we run into a problem translating a work into French, it is because there is some conceptual wording problem in English. But we can go back and revise the English, when we run into such problems. Also, when these concerns arise, our translators are very good about asking the exam writer what it is we are trying to measure and working from there. All of this helps us with our quality control on the English version of the test as well as the French.

After the fact we do an item analysis on both the English version of the test and the French translation. We have very rigorous technical standards that individual test items have to meet. If they don't meet them, we automatically flag the items. Our procedures show us what didn't work properly. It is rare, but it happens. If we find something untoward, our experts sit down and decide whether it is a wording problem. Rarely, we will throw out an item, or we might double-key it. If it is a translation problem, and we didn't represent the meaning accurately, in other words it has not affected the English version, we will throw out that item in the French version, but keep it in the English. Again, this is very rare.

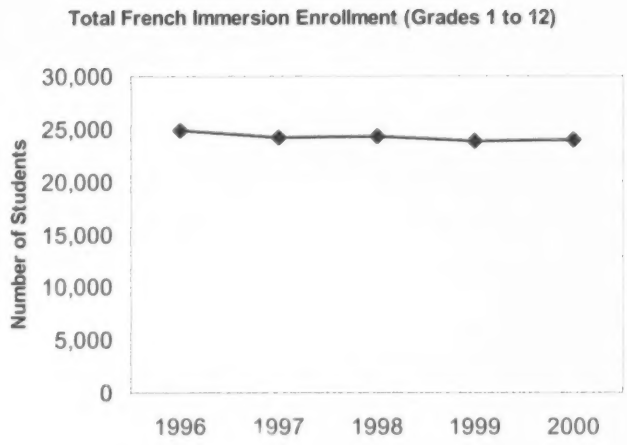

Exhibit 1 French Immersion Enrolment, 1996–2000

Language Arts 30 exam for French immersion students so that it can properly appear on their transcripts in the future.

Besides the diploma examination program, we have a provincial achievement testing program. Children in grades 3, 6 and 9 (including public and separate schools, home education, cyber schools, and private and charter schools) write our provincial achievement tests. All children in those grades are expected to write the exam. The local superintendent of schools may, however, excuse individual students from writing, if participation would be harmful or if they cannot respond to the test either in its original form or in an approved modified version. Our participation rates are quite high, in the mid-ninety percent range in Grades 3 and 6 and around 90% in Grade 9. In large-scale testing these participation rates are pretty robust. In Grade 3, children write achievement tests in English Language Arts and Mathematics. If they are in francophone or immersion programs, they are expected to write the math test in their language of instruction. In Grade 6 we have English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and French Language Arts. The immersion students are expected to write in their language of instruction in the content areas.

Alberta's basic policy for achievement tests is that if the language of instruction is French, then students should write the test in French. Most do. Research over a period of years, in which some immersion students wrote a test in French and some in English, provides good evidence that students get higher marks if they write in English. But when we expanded the achievement testing program in 1995, so that it covered all of the subjects each year rather than just one on a rotating basis every four years, we found the schools saying they did not want some of their immersion students writing in English and some writing in French. They

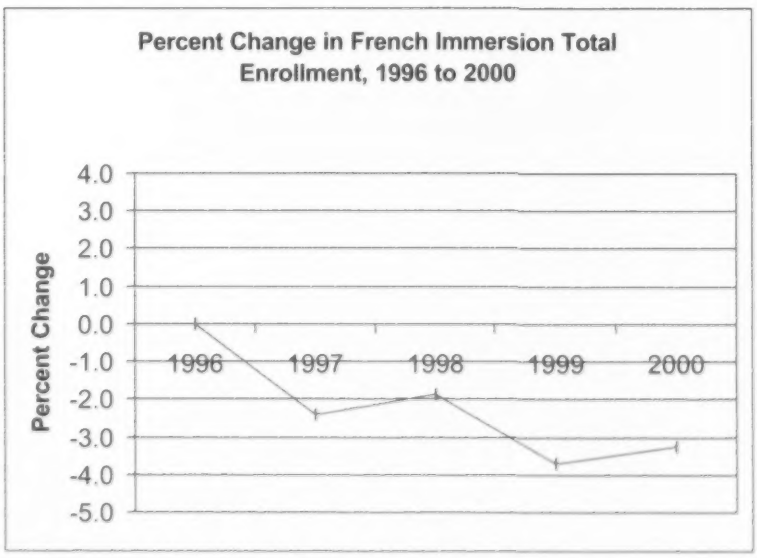

Exhibit 2 Percent Change in Enrolment, 1996–2000

wanted them all writing in the same language, so their results can be looked at as a whole. So we decided that since French immersion is about studying in French, the students should write in French. Everybody goes into it with their eyes open. We know that if they write in English they would do a little better, but I will show you evidence later that we don't have a lot to worry about when they are writing in French (please see Exhibits 19 & 22; see also, Living the Dream Panel, Brian Hall).

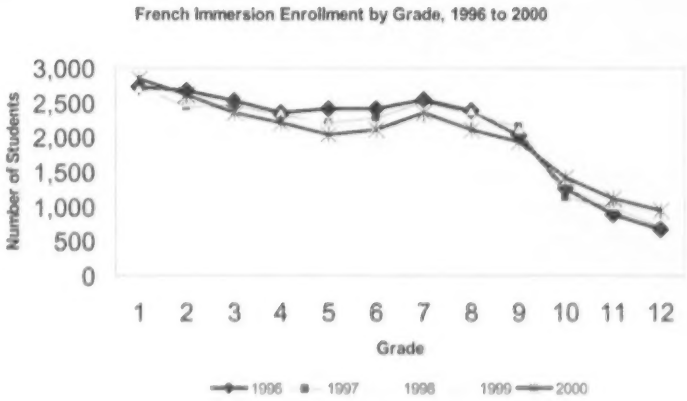

Exhibit 3 Enrolment by Grade, 1996–2000

When we report the results, we are reporting the percentage of students meeting standards. We report in two sets for the achievement testing program: for the students who wrote in English and for the students who wrote in French. One table in the report also breaks the overall results down into various programs and groups. So with this you can see how the immersion students in your district did, as compared with those in the rest of the province. You get the overall results plus the breakdown. Other tables in the report give performance on a question-by-question basis as well as by different reporting categories. The last table gives quite a detailed breakdown for each student, so you can see their relative strengths and weaknesses.

Achievement testing has its place, but keep it in its place. Achievement tests and diploma exams are not the be-all and end-all of school performance, but they shouldn't be dismissed. They are important pieces of information, but they are only part of the story of school excellence and of the success of a French immersion program.

With this in mind, let's look at some of the data on enrolment trends, course completions and pass rates, high school diplomas awarded, participation rates in achievement tests, performance on achievement tests, and performance on diploma exams.

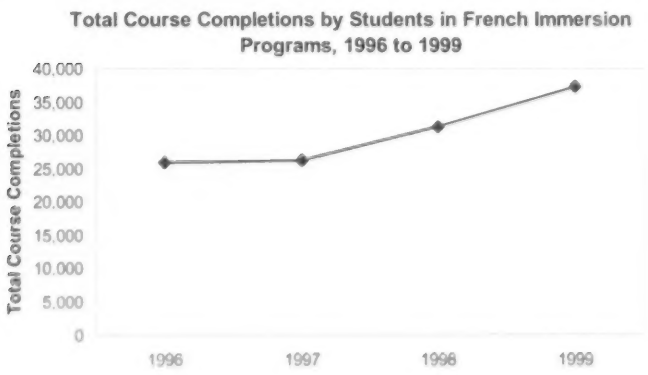

Exhibit 4 Course Completions, 1996–2000

When you look at the French immersion enrolment trend data in this type of graph (please see Exhibit 1), you can see that it is pretty flat. It shows a slight drop from 1996 to 1997 and since then it has been steady. Looking at that data in a slightly different way (please

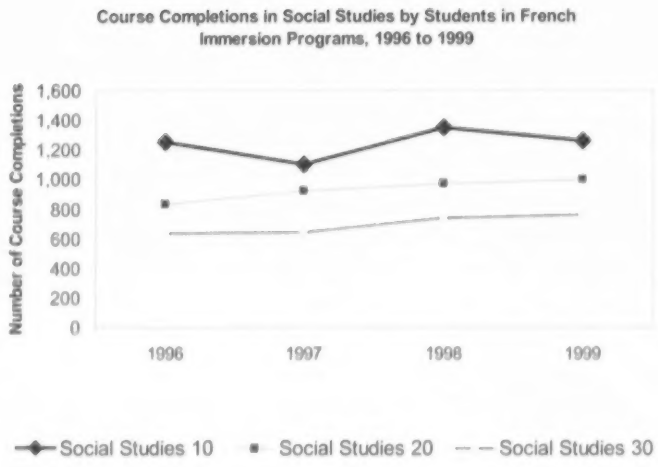

Exhibit 5 Course Completions, Social Studies, 1996–99

see Exhibit 2), the differences are emphasized. If we use 1996 as the baseline of "0", we have a marked drop in enrolment of 2.5% in 1997, a slight improvement in 1998, another drop in 1999 and a slight improvement in 2000. (This is based on actual French immersion numbers. The total number of students in Alberta has gone up substantially during that same time.)

Now, what happens with our retention rate in French immersion? Our highest enrolment consistently (please see Exhibit 3) is always Grade 1 and our lowest enrolment in French immersion is always Grade 12. When we start looking at it, we notice that we are getting a bit of a spread in the Grade 12 retention rate; it is improving. More of those already in the French immersion program are staying until the end of Grade 12. One interesting thing to notice is that we have an enrolment growth at the beginning of secondary school (Grade 7 in Alberta), because of the new students starting late immersion. Then it starts to drop off again. We have a big drop going from Grade 9 into senior high school at Grade 10. In most metropolitan centres these are points where students change schools. Then, if we look at total course completions (please see Exhibit 4) by students in French immersion programs, we see that over the last four years we have a steadily improving situation. Total course completions by students in French immersion programs are rising.

Here is the story in Social Studies: course completions in grades 10, 11 and 12. (Please see Exhibit 5.) Selected science and math course completions (please see Exhibit 6): generally an upward trend in course completions. And then look at the various language arts courses, similar upward trends (please see Exhibit 7). I won't belabour these statistics.

The pass rates for students in French immersion programs are extremely high, close to 100% and consistent, as you know. (Please see Exhibits 20 and 21.)

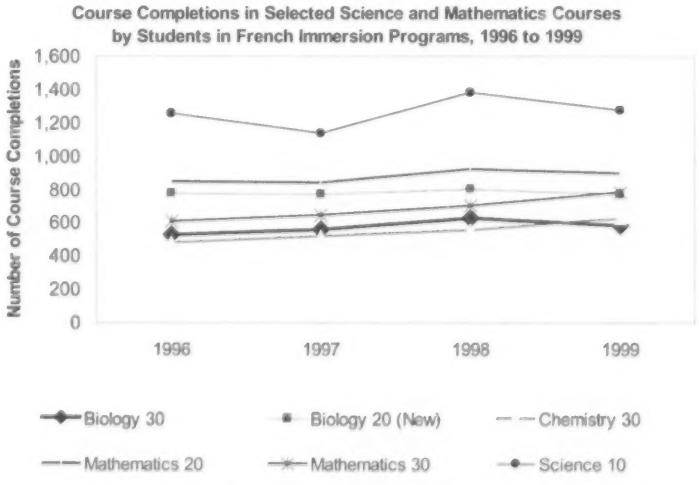

Exhibit 6 Course Completions, Science/Math, 1996–99

Looking at the numbers of high school diplomas awarded to students in French immersion programs (please see Exhibit 8), we again see an increase in the real number over the last four years.

So, although overall immersion trend numbers are a little lower than they were four years ago, within that, the proportion of students who are graduating is increasing.

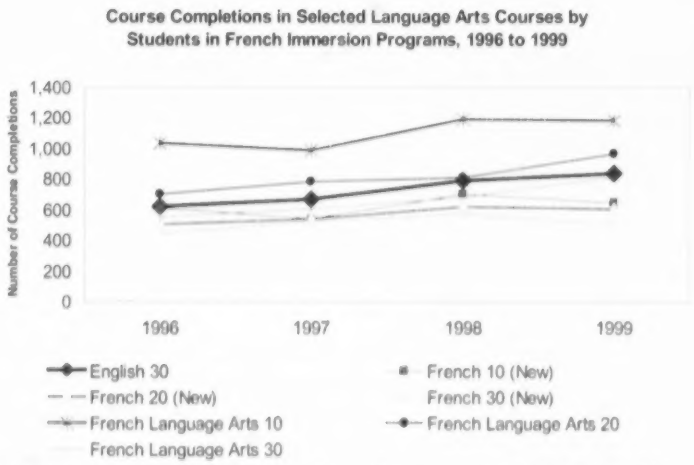

Exhibit 7 Course Completions, Language Arts, 1996–99

I want to talk a little bit now about selected achievement tests. I told you earlier that our participation rate provincially is quite high. Among our French immersion population it is even higher. We are up over the 95% participation rate for Grade 6 Math and Grade 6 Social Studies. (Please see Exhibit 22).

This next chart (please see Exhibit 9) shows how the students have been doing in Grade 3 English Language Arts over time. The French immersion students do just fine. They are obviously not suffering any damage in English Language Arts by being in a French immersion program. I will come back to that in a bit.

Grade 6 English Language Arts (please see Exhibit 10): again the performance of French immersion students is very strong at both the acceptable standard and at the standard of excellence. Is that predictable because of the type of student that goes into immersion? I have some evidence from a new type of analysis (please see Exhibits 11 and 12, which I will cite later). The acceptable standard here was 85% and the standard of excellence was 15%. So if we apply those standards, you can see that the immersion students are doing very well.

For Grade 9 English Language Arts (please see Exhibit 13), you will notice that the gap between the English results and the French immersion results gets wider from Grade 3 to 9. So in Grade 9 we have as close to 100% of the students as you are going to get, meeting the acceptable standard and a marked gap at the standard of excellence, well above the 15% requirement.

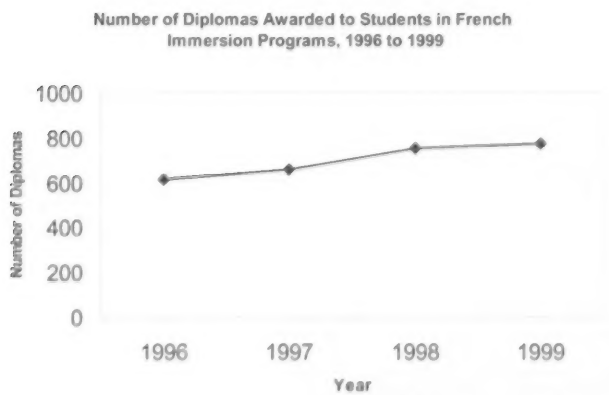

Exhibit 8 Diplomas Awarded to FI Students, 1996–99

In French Language Arts, again results for immersion students are over the 85% mark for

acceptable and right at the 15% mark for the standard of excellence for Grade 9.

To summarize those last few charts in a different way. We have a growing gap in English Language Arts. Here, the immersion results are compared with the overall provincial results for Grade 3, 6 and 9, based on the acceptable standard. At the standard of excellence, immersion and non-immersion results are comparable in Grade 3, and show a marked difference in Grade 9 (please see Exhibits 13 and 22).

In Mathematics (please see Exhibit 14), we see an even stronger trend. In Grade 3 the two groups are pretty well equal. In Grade 6, the immersion students have a clear advantage and by Grade 9, they have a dramatic advantage. That is, when they write in French.

The question is sometimes raised about French translations in Social Studies, but again the children in immersion programs do well in Grade 6 and Grade 9 in Social Studies. (Please see Exhibit 15.) You don't see the marked gap that we saw in some other subjects, but they do well.

It is a similar story in Science (please see Exhibit 16). There is no significant difference at all in Grade 6 and an advantage for the immersion students in Grade 9.

We know immersion students would score higher if they wrote in English, so the fact that they are writing in French and still doing at least as well as the children who write in English is significant. It allows us to tell parents their children are not going to suffer in their performance. They are not being disadvantaged.

What I would like to do now is introduce you to a new way of looking at results. It is a method of analysis that we have recently provided to superintendents around the province. We titled the report "Prior Level of Achievement". I am going to explain, in a nutshell, the methodology. I think you may be able to see some of the advantages of it. We've applied that methodology to French immersion results.

You know that controversy often arises when School A's results are compared with School B's and one is so much higher or lower than the other. The immediate feedback is "Well, what do you expect. It's a richer neighbourhood. So ignore the results." I have been in this business for a few years now and it bothers me that we are dismissing data we should not be. I have wondered for some time if there wasn't a way to get a handle on that. I turned to our psychometric experts for advice and they introduced a methodology using regression analysis.

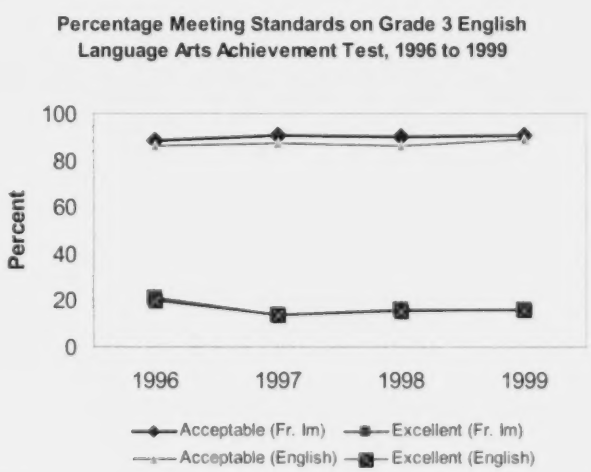

Exhibit 9 Grade 3 ELA Achievement Test, 1996–99

To explain, let's use our earlier case study, Grade 6 Math. We can take the students who wrote Grade 6 Math in your school in 1999, and because our student information system gives every child an identifier or student information number, we can go back three years ago and look at how that particular group of students did, when they wrote the Grade 3 Math achievement test. We went back to their Grade 3 results and from those, we predicted how well they should have done on the Grade 6 Math achievement test.

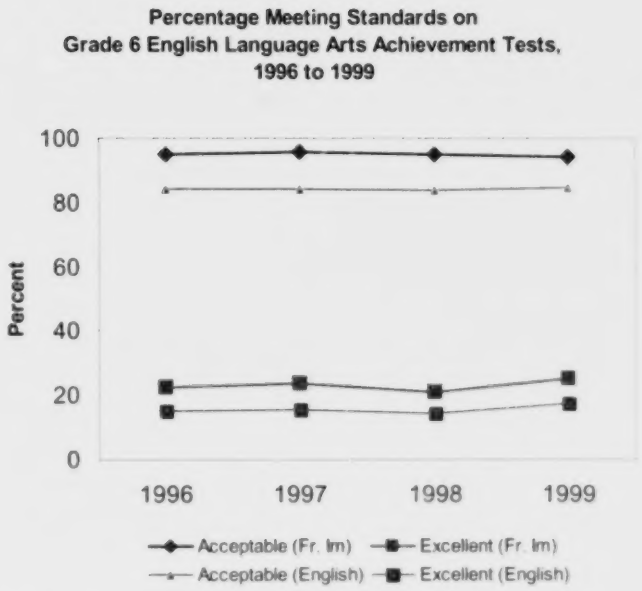

Exhibit 10 Grade 6 ELA Achievement Tests, 1996–99

As an example, if their Grade 3 results were 5% below the provincial average three years ago, then you would expect their result in Grade 6 to be about 5% below the provincial average. I give you this to help you with the concept though it is technically not quite correct—but it is the basic idea. This analysis gets rid of all the noise, or confounding factors, that people point to, because we are talking about the same students. Whatever the socio-economic status or other factors, we are talking about the same students. Now, instead of dismissing the results of school comparisons on the basis of differing backgrounds of the students in each school, we can ask: what has the system, the school, done with the students we've got?

We did some piloting of this methodology a year ago and it seemed very promising. This year we've started using it on a limited basis for public and separate systems. So I thought it would be interesting to take the same methodology and apply it to French immersion. What have we done with the students that we've got in French immersion? Is it just that we get the cream of the crop? Are the consistently higher marks just a selection issue? or a de-selection issue because marginal students leave the program?

Let's focus on Grade 6 English Language Arts written in 1999. (Please see Exhibit 11) According to our student information system, there were 1,800 children who were in French immersion programs in both 1996 and 1999 and wrote both the Grade 3 English Language Arts achievement test in 1996 and the Grade 6 English Language Arts achievement test in 1999. When we looked at their results in 1996 on the Grade 3 test, their average was 70.0%, significantly above the overall provincial average of 68.1%. We also looked at their 1999 results on the Grade 6 test. The immersion students averaged 73.4%, and the provincial average was 68.8%. Again, significantly above the province.

Then we compare their actual performance with their predicted performance. If we go back to the 1996 data and use regression analysis to predict the 1999 results, we find that the average should be 70.0%. This may be the only case of all of our studies where it is the same,

Grade 6 English Language Arts
Average Actual and Predicted Achievement Test Results, Reported as Percentages
Students in a French Immersion Program in Both 1996 and 1999

Number of FI Students	Actual Grade 3 Results		Actual Grade 6 Results		Predicted 1999 Grade 6 Results	Gain Over Predicted
	FI	Prov	FI	Prov	FI	
1800	70.0	68.1	73.4	68.8	70.0	3.4 (+)
	above province		above province		gained more than expected	

Exhibit 11 Actual and Predicted, Gr 6, ELA, 1996 & 1999

so do not be fooled by that. They actually scored 73.4%. A chi-square test for statistical significance tells us that getting an average score 3.4% higher than predicted is not simply due to chance. The results in Grade 6 are significantly higher than we would have predicted based on the Grade 3 results. So that is an encouraging sign.

We can compare the 1996 Grade 6 results of French immersion students (1,546 students) with their Grade 9 results in English language arts (please see Exhibit 12). The 1996 average was 73.6% and the 1999 was 75.1%. We predicted an average of 72.0% for 1999. The difference was 3.1% and, again, the actual result is significantly higher. There is a greater that expected improvement from Grade 3 to Grade 6 and again from Grade 6 to Grade 9. In the absence of other evidence and other considerations, it appears that students are getting their money's worth out of their French immersion experience.

Grade 9 English Language Arts
Average Actual and Predicted Achievement Test Results, Reported as Percentages
Students in a French Immersion Program in Both 1996 and 1999

Number of FI Students	Actual Grade 6 Results		Actual Grade 9 Results		Predicted 1999 Grade 9 Results	Gain Over Predicted
	FI	Prov	FI	Prov	FI	
1546	**73.6**	**68.7**	**75.1**	**68.4**	72	**3.1 (+)**
	above province		above province		gained more than expected	

Exhibit 12 Actual and Predicted, Gr 9 ELA, 1996 & 1999

I am now going to summarize several of these analyses. In Math, Grade 3 to Grade 6, we have a significant growth, higher that predicted. Math, 6 to 9, the same. We can conclude that in Math (written in French) we are showing gains that are significant and beyond expectation. Earlier I showed you the English Language Arts results. Let's break it down a bit. Late immersion programs allow us to make a different comparison regarding English Language Arts: the effect of learning French on English proficiency. Late immersion students—registered in a French immersion program in 1999, but not registered in French immersion in 1996—wrote ELA

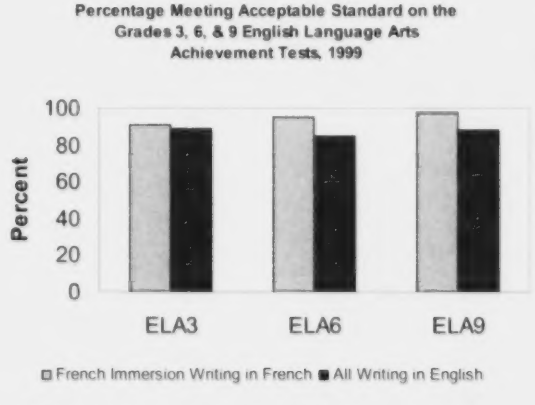

Exhibit 13 ELA Achievement Tests, 1999

achievement tests in 1993 and 1996 as well as 1999. We found that there was no significant difference in English Language Arts between Grade 3 and Grade 6 for these late immersion students, but there was a significant positive difference between Grade 6 and Grade 9. (It should be noted here that the fewer the kids involved, the bigger the difference has to be before it is significantly statistically different.) This suggests that learning French has actually improved their English Language Arts scores.

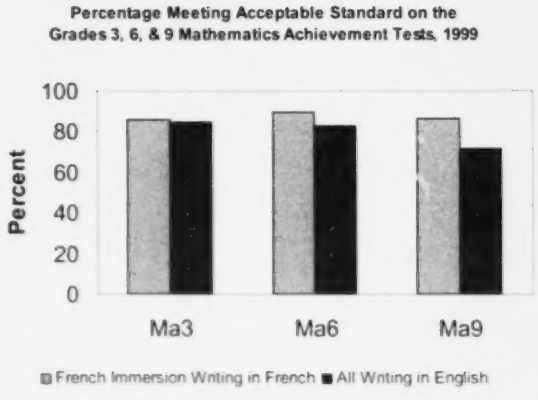

Exhibit 14 Math Achievement Tests, 1999

A similar result comes from a reverse calculation. There are many students who were registered in French immersion three years ago but are no longer in the program. For our purposes in this analysis, they left the immersion program, but are still in Alberta. These students were in French immersion in Grade 3, when they wrote the English Language Arts test but were not in immersion by Grade 6, when they again wrote the English Language Arts test. Even though they left the French immersion program, there have been residual benefits. Between Grade 3 and Grade 6, they have shown an improvement, that is a significant positive difference, of 2.5 %. In the second group, the students were in French immersion in Grade 6 but not by Grade 9. Again, we see a significant improvement.

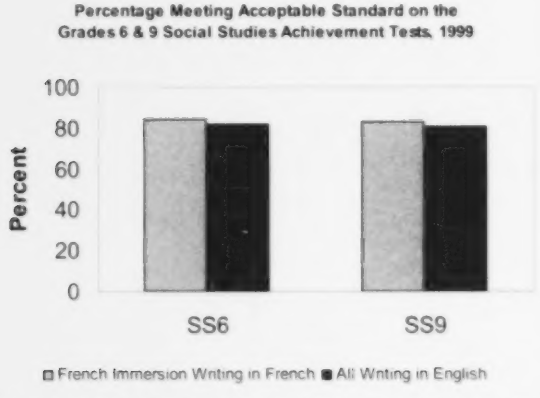

Exhibit 15 Soc. Studies Achievement Tests, 1999

These results do not include students who have come from other provinces, or left to go to other provinces, as we needed to ensure we had the same children at each stage. What have we done with the students in the French immersion program? It appears, quite a lot. It's a different way of looking at the results of the achievement tests.

I want to show you some traditional data on diploma exams and then go to a similar analysis for those exams. In diploma exam results we look at the results for students who write the French translation of a diploma exam. This includes both francophone and immersion students. About 80–90% are immersion

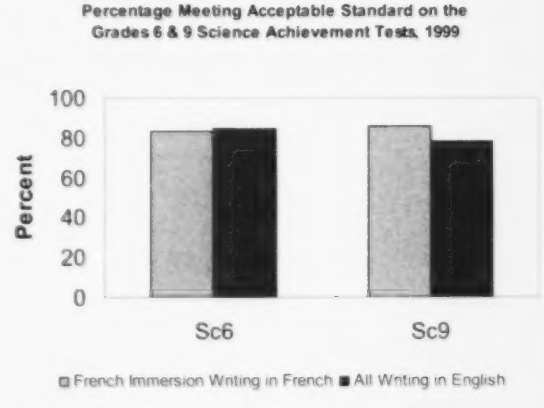

Exhibit 16 Science Achievement Tests, 1999

	Average Scores			Percent Meeting Acceptable Standard		
	Actual Written in French	Predicted if Written in English	Actual Written in English	Actual Written in French	Predicted if Written in English	Actual Written in English
1997	**70.7 ***	**72.9 ****	**67.0**	**97.4 ***	**98.4**	**94.9**
1998	**71.4 ***	**72.9 ****	**67.3**	**98.2 ***	**99.3 ****	**95.2**
1999	**68.9 ***	**72.4 ****	**67.8**	**97.6 ***	**99.5 ****	**95.6**

* Higher than students writing in English

** Significantly different from actual scores

Exhibit 17 Performance of FI Students on Études sociales 30 Compared with their Predicted Scores on the English Version, 1997–1999

students. So these are largely immersion results. On Math 30 (please see Exhibit 19) their results are consistently at least as good as the English results. At the standard of excellence they are somewhat higher. On the Social Studies 30 diploma exams immersion students' results are very much in line with the English students' results. And except for this past year, they were high at the standard of excellence.

Summarizing, we have looked at the evidence in several ways, and it shows that French immersion students are doing very well. They benefit from participation in a French immersion program, not only by learning French but also by enhanced learning in English Language Arts and the content subjects.

	Average Scores			Percent Meeting Acceptable Standard		
	Actual Written in English	Predicted if Written in English	Actual Written in English	Actual Written in French	Predicted if Written in English	Actual Written in English
1997	**67.9 ***	**67.9**	**65.8**	**89.6 ***	**99.3 ****	**88.0**
1998	**70.4 ***	**71.3**	**67.7**	**92.6 ***	**100.0 ****	**91.1**
1999	**67.4**	**69.5 ****	**68.1**	**94.7 ***	**99.7 ****	**91.5**

* Higher than students writing in English

** Significantly different from actual scores

Exhibit 18 Performance of FI Students on Études sociales 30 Compared with their Predicted Scores on the English Version, 1997–1999

Social Studies 30 French Translation and English Version Results
1996 to 1999

	1996		1997		1998		1999	
	French	English	French	English	French	English	French	English
Number Writing	402	19,566	422	19,146	476	19,050	624	19,472
Mean	69.4	67.3	69.7	67.0	79.9	67.3	68.6	67.8
% Excellent	28.9	18.7	24.4	17.5	26.7	18.3	18.9	19.2
% Acceptable	90.4	94.2	96.2	94.9	98.1	95.2	97.1	95.6

Mathematics 30 French Translation and English Version Results
1996 to1999

	1996		1997		1998		1999	
	French	English	French	English	French	English	French	English
Number Writing	429	18,400	414	18,062	456	18,363	506	19,142
Mean	69.4	65.5	69.8	65.8	71.6	67.7	70.6	68.1
% Excellent	28.9	20.9	30.7	20.8	36.6	24.0	31.8	24.5
% Acceptable	90.4	87.3	90.3	88.0	93.2	91.1	94.7	91.5

Predicted Results on Social Studies 30 and Mathematics 30 if Examinations Had Been Written in English Compared With Actual Results on French Translations

	Average Scores				Percent Meeting Standards							
					% Acceptable				% Excellence			
	Actual	Predicted	Diff	95% CI	Actual	Predicted	Diff	Chisq	Actual	Predicted	Diff	Chisq
Social Studies 30												
1997	70.7	72.9	2.23	(1.49, 2.98)	97.4	98.4	1.0	=	25.5	26.5	1.0	=
1998	71.4	72.9	1.55	(0.88, 2.23)	98.2	99.3	1.1	-	27.7	25.2	-2.5	=
1999	68.9	72.4	3.42	(2.74, 4.01)	97.6	99.5	1.9	-	19.7	21.0	1.3	=
Mathematics 30												
1997	67.9	67.9	0.02	(-1.35, 1.39)	89.6	99.3	9.7	-	25.7	2.4	-23.3	+
1998	70.4	71.3	0.93	(-0.40, 2.27)	92.6	100.0	7.4	-	29.9	7.1	-22.8	+
1999	67.4	69.5	2.14	(0.89, 3.39)	94.7	99.7	5.0	-	19.9	6.2	-13.7	+

Exhibit 19 Diploma Examination Results, 1996–1999

Course Completions and Pass Rate of French Immersion Students in Selected High School Courses 1996 to 1999

Course	1996 Course Completions	1996 Pass Rate (%)	1997 Course Completions	1997 Pass Rate (%)	1998 Course Completions	1998 Pass Rate (%)	1999 Course Completions	1999 Pass Rate (%)
Applied Sociology 30			1	100.0			1	100.0
Biology 15 (IB)	15	100.0	1	100.0	11	100.0	12	100.0
Biology 20 (New)	780	95.7	779	95.7	807	95.3	774	95.2
Biology 25 (IB)	7	100.0	3	100.0	7	100.0	5	100.0
Biology 30	547	98.7	577	100.0	656	99.0	600	99.8
Biology 35 (AP)	.				6	100.0	17	100.0
Chemistry 20 (New)	718	94.5	807	94.1	873	94.1	836	95.8
Chemistry 25 (IB)	31	100.0	15	100.0	18	100.0	35	100.0
Chemistry 30	507	100.0	539	97.5	568	100.0	650	99.2
Chemistry 35 (AP)							1	100.0
Chemistry 35 (IB)	23	100.0	25	100.0	11	100.0	25	100.0
English 10	1249	96.9	1115	96.3	1325	96.7	1225	98.0
English 13	41	85.0	45	93.3	78	89.6	48	97.9
English 16	1	100.0			1	100.0		
English 20	841	97.5	945	97.2	988	96.6	1002	98.0
English 23	47	91.1	40	92.5	50	98.0	38	97.4
English 26	1	100.0			1	100.0		
English 30	622	100.0	675	100.0	802	100.0	851	100.0
English 33	34	97.1	33	100.0	35	97.1	31	100.0
English 35 (IB)	17	100.0	26	100.0	27	100.0	37	100.0
English SL 10							2	100.0
English SL 10							2	100.0
English SL 10A			1	100.0				
English SL 10C			1					
Francais 10	25	100.0	7	100.0	12	91.7	8	87.5
Francais 13	3	100.0			2	100.0	4	25.0
Francais 20	23	100.0	9	100.0	4	100.0	3	100.0
Francais 23			2	100.0			1	100.0
Francais 30	1	100.0	3	100.0	6	100.0	5	100.0
Francais 33			2	100.0	2	100.0	1	
French 10	2	100.0	1	100.0				
French 10 (New)	609	100.0	540	100.0	705	100.0	646	100.0
French 10N (9 Year)	4	50.0						
French 20	6	100.0	9	100.0	2	100.0		
French 20 (New)	507	100.0	537	100.0	619	100.0	608	100.0
French 20N (9 Year)	3	100.0						
French 30	130	100.0	1	100.0	3	100.0	24	100.0
French 30 (New)	450	101.1	525	100.0	573	100.0	504	100.0
French 30N (9 Year)	10	90.0						
French 31A	49	98.0	27	96.3	36	94.4	15	93.3
French 31B	11	100.0	12	83.3	5	100.0	1	100.0
French 31C	4	100.0	3	100.0	3	100.0	9	100.0
French Language Arts 10	1031	96.5	985	97.4	1191	96.6	1184	98.1

Exhibit 20 Course Completions and Pass Rates, 1996–99

Course Completions and Pass Rate of French Immersion Students in Selected High School Courses1996 to 1999, continued

Course	1996 Course Completions	1996 Pass Rate (%)	1997 Course Completions	1997 Pass Rate (%)	1998 Course Completions	1998 Pass Rate (%)	1999 Course Completions	1999 Pass Rate (%)
French Language Arts 20	698	98.9	783	97.1	807	96.5	965	96.5
French Language Arts 30	549	99.1	603	99.2	682	98.5	816	98.3
Mathematics 10	1237	93.3	1086	92.8	1310	91.7	550	90.0
Mathematics 13	144	86.0	155	89.0	233	89.5	110	87.9
Mathematics 14 (Formerly 15)	8	100.0	15	100.0	17	100.0	19	94.7
Mathematics 16					2	50.0	1	100.0
Mathematics 20	883	95.5	869	93.0	1028	92.4	1003	93.8
Mathematics 23	129	89.4	155	84.9	164	88.2	160	91.0
Mathematics 24 (Formerly 25)	7	100.0	8	62.5	14	100.0	7	100.0
Mathematics 30	675	100.0	715	100.0	758	100.0	845	100.9
Mathematics 31	250	93.5	226	92.9	277	96.0	324	93.4
Mathematics 33	84	94.0	84	87.8	117	86.1	89	90.7
Mathematics 35 (AP)					3	100.0	7	100.0
Mathematics Prep 10							39	92.3
Physics 15 (IB)					7	85.7	9	88.9
Physics 20 (New)	464	95.0	495	92.9	604	95.2	570	95.4
Physics 30	248	98.8	277	97.8	347	98.8	352	99.4
Pure Mathematics 10							667	92.2
Pure Mathematics 20							3	100.0
Science 10	1268	95.6	1147	94.2	1396	95.4	1285	96.9
Science 14	34	100.0	30	93.3	39	94.7	29	86.2
Science 15	44	95.5	33	97.0	65	98.5		
Science 16					1			
Science 20	22	77.3	25	100.0	24	91.7	39	89.7
Science 24	18	94.4	25	96.0	21	95.2	19	94.7
Science 30	9	100.0	20	95.0	7	100.0	32	96.9
Sciences pratiques 15							49	100.0
Social Studies 10	1254	96.2	1106	96.3	1347	97.3	1258	97.4
Social Studies 13	32	90.6	34	94.1	50	92.0	10	90.0
Social Studies 20	832	97.6	926	97.0	973	96.4	998	97.7
Social Studies 23	33	90.9	37	97.2	48	95.8	26	100.0
Social Studies 26	1	100.0						
Social Studies 30	650	97.2	654	98.6	759	99.3	782	100.1
Social Studies 33	27	96.3	47	95.7	80	100.0	66	96.9

Exhibit 21 Course Completions and Pass Rates, 1996–99, continued

Percentage of Students Meeting Standards on Selected Achievement Tests
1996 to 1999

	French Immersion (Wrote in French)				Non-French Immersion (Wrote in English)			
	1996	1997	1998	1999	1996	1997	1998	1999
Grade 3 Mathematics								
Participation	99.2	98.0	97.4	99.5	95.3	94.8	93.2	94.1
Excellent	14.9	18.5	20.4	22.5	18.9	21.1	20.8	25.4
Acceptable	89.5	91.7	81.9	85.6	90.9	92.6	80.4	84.7
Grade 3 English Language Arts								
Participation	98.6	98.6	96.9	98.9	94.0	94.1	93.3	94.1
Excellent	21.0	13.5	16.0	15.9	19.8	13.6	15.2	15.8
Acceptable	88.3	90.3	89.9	90.5	86.0	87.2	86.0	88.7
Grade 6 Mathematics								
Participation	99.3	98.8	95.7	96.5	94.9	94.8	94.0	92.9
Excellent	26.2	33.6	32.5	23.1	23.6	24.9	15.9	16.9
Acceptable	91.7	95.1	96.4	89.7	85.8	88.2	81.2	82.8
Grade 6 English Language Arts								
Participation	98.2	98.6	98.6	96.3	93.7	94.3	93.5	93.1
Excellent	22.5	23.7	20.7	25.1	15.2	15.5	14.4	17.4
Acceptable	95.0	95.7	95.0	94.0	84.3	84.2	83.8	84.4
Grade 6 Social Studies								
Participation	99.4	98.9	98.8	96.6	94.6	94.3	93.4	96.4
Excellent	8.6	12.5	11.1	14.5	15.8	16.9	16.9	17.5
Acceptable	72.9	80.8	77.2	84.3	77.6	77.9	78.0	81.7
Grade 9 Mathematics								
Participation	96.9	99.1	98.6	94.4	91.7	91.3	88.9	88.6
Excellent	19.4	23.4	23.8	15.4	14.0	11.9	13.8	15.2
Acceptable	87.7	85.4	89.9	86.2	69.5	67.1	71.0	71.6
Grade 9 English Language Arts								
Participation	96.5	98.6	98.7	98.5	90.9	91.2	89.3	89.7
Excellent	24.1	22.1	23.2	23.3	11.4	11.3	11.3	12.1
Acceptable	98.8	98.7	98.2	97.6	88.2	86.9	87.4	87.6
Grade 9 Science								
Participation	96.3	99.0	98.6	98.6	92.0	91.6	89.5	89.7
Excellent	21.5	14.0	13.9	14.7	18.1	15.4	12.8	14.8
Acceptable	89.4	83.8	85.7	85.5	80.9	78.4	78.3	78.1
Grade 9 Social Studies								
Participation	96.4	99.0	98.8	98.9	91.7	91.6	89.0	89.8
Excellent	12.6	14.0	17.3	17.3	15.2	15.4	13.9	17.8
Acceptable	84.4	83.8	89.1	83.2	79.4	81.3	78.4	80.4

Exhibit 22 Students Meeting Standards on Selected Achievement Tests, 1996–99

Appendix D

- Callaghan, Brian, Judy Grigat, and Rick St. Arnaud. **"Building the Future: The Role of the Senior District Administrator."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999. Reprinted with permission.

- Kobasiuk, Phyllis, Brian Mitchell, and Joanne Fiest. **"Building the Future: The Role of the Trustee."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999. Reprinted with permission.

- Canadian Parents for French. ***CPF School Self-Assessment Tool for French-Second-Language Education Programs.*** Ottawa: Canadian Parents for French, 2001. Reprinted with permission.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

Building the Future: The Role of the Senior District Administrator

Brian Callaghan

Most of my career has been spent within a multilingual/political context.

Growing up in Quebec, I learned that language is not just about communication, it is about other issues as well. When I first went into the arctic, around the time of the signing of the James Bay agreement, language was an issue with the Aboriginal people who were primarily James Bay Cree and Inuit. The provincial government, at that time, had its language policies in place to assimilate either culture. On entering Grade 3, parents had to choose between English or French as the language of instruction for the remainder of their child's time in school. For Kindergarten, and grades 1 and 2, instruction had been in their mother tongue, either Cree or Inuktitut.

My role as a teacher and as a school principal has always been in a trilingual context. Seeking peace and harmony within the staff and within the community is another social/political goal.

Even when I moved to Northern Alberta, where I joined the Northlands School Division, aboriginal languages continued to be an issue. From the elders' point of view the Cree language was under severe threat of becoming either unique or extinct. We developed programs and curriculum, and worked strenuously to provide materials, through the department of education as well as private sponsors, so that the various aboriginal groups could continue to maintain an aboriginal curriculum and language. To my knowledge, the Northlands School Division still teaches the Cree language. The core curriculum is delivered in an immersion model.

When I joined Mount Rundle School Division in 1990, a significant element of the community wanted to continue to implement French immersion beyond Kindergarten and Grade 3. The trustees realized that there was a set of issues that were already beginning to gel. They realized that continued implementation was a complex affair. When recruiting a superintendent, they specifically looked for someone sympathetic to languages, not necessarily someone who was bilingual. They wanted someone who would support language program development. They made this a point in developing their hiring profile.

Until then, they probably had one of the most minimal French-as-a-second-language programs running in any jurisdiction of the province. Canmore was a coal mining town with a strong English base. Immigrants who came to work the coal mines learned English rather than any other language. French was seen as a language that came from the east and that meant politics. The first challenge we faced was to create an environment that de-politicized the issue. We went through many different sub-committee, community-based meetings to start to build an acceptance of bringing in new languages. We discussed languages other than French. We realized that we had to be prepared to offer the community some compromises that would leave us in a situation where we didn't have just immersion and then FSL [core French] programs starting in late elementary or

junior high. The parents wanted me to recommend that we begin our FSL program at Grade 1, but there was a feeling that French immersion would be too much at risk in the beginning if there were too much choice. Accordingly, we held our FSL program at the Grade 4 level until the immersion program had expanded to cover Kindergarten to Grade 3. Only then did we implement an FSL program that started in Grade 1. We had to be flexible. To date, we have immersion from Kindergarten to Grade 10, and FSL starting in Grade 1.

We also realized that there was going to be a pupil-teacher ratio differential between the two language programs. We had to be prepared to face the equity issue: the French classes would always be smaller than the English classes. In the beginning, it is fair to say that the trustees stood their political ground, taking the pressure off the class differential evident in the first few years of immersion implementation.

In an effort to keep the trustees open to the immersion concept we provided what we thought was a major accomplishment, a trustee in-service. We wanted them to listen to what are, perhaps in many jurisdictions, minority presentations. The intent of the in-service was to sensitize the trustees to, and accept, the fact that there would be opposing political pressures if they spent funds in such areas as a French library and resources materials. We felt that if they could, through these in-service sessions and seminars, develop a neutrality, the hostility would vanish, and they would be willing to at least listen without bias. We felt it to be a significant accomplishment.

The chairman of the school board, in the role of a father of six children, was not overly sympathetic to the French immersion program. However, over time he changed his mind. He came to realize that these French immersion students could accomplish a considerable amount. He enrolled his son in the immersion program. As a unilingual Albertan, he was stunned that his son could go into a classroom of six-year-olds, the teacher speaking only in French, and, with their limited vocabulary, the children could understand the instructions and interact with each other. His son would come home and ask his father things in French. He would have French words and he would ask his father the English word. Gaining the support of the board chair was very important. Watching the father's joy in his son's accomplishment was something to behold. Over a period of time, all trustees developed an openness on the subject of immersion.

Politically, we were very conscious of the fact that the trustees controlled the final decision. We worked to have them listen and feel comfortable with the notion of experimentation. We started out, as I think they have in many jurisdictions, from information we received at many conferences for parents of French immersion students. As in all things, reliable information related to student performance was critical. Regrettably, not all of the factors relating to decisions regarding immersion remain constant. Over the years we've suffered the reduction of federal grants. All of the promises made to parents of fifty students a year, so we could have two sections per grade or more, have failed to meet expectations. We are now faced with split classes and are wondering how we can offer credit courses with small student numbers at the high school level. Once again we need to be flexible, especially at the upper high school end. We've gone into locally approved courses in French culture and literature. We have done everything from French Social Studies to special projects. We've really tried to entice teenagers who, by the time they are in high school, will negotiate the decisions that affect them. Up to that point—from the first years of their life right up until about junior high—they have had most of their decisions made by their parents. But in high school, their peers draw them to new things and away from things like immersion. The high school

curriculum, at this point, really starts to bear down on them academically. My own daughters, who have been in French immersion since kindergarten, felt tremendous pressure carrying on with language arts in two languages, when their classmates would have "soft" options. So, we are constantly challenged by how to create an environment for French immersion students where the reward for competency is worth the work put in to achieve it. To the student, immersion is similar to what we often do for gifted students: "You're gifted, do a bigger paper."

We've also worked very hard with our parents. The degree of interaction we have with French immersion parents is far greater than I would expect to have with most parents. French immersion parents, perhaps because they are worried or overly concerned or overly interested or maybe all of the above, want more time with the system and the teachers; they want more time to talk about the future of French immersion. They are constantly asking me at information sessions: "What happens when my child gets to high school?" or "I've heard this report about science marks going in the tank." They really listen to all the myths and stories. To counter this we need to be prepared to present factual information on those issues. We also need to work with national associations that are tracking student performance issues and disproving myths. I accept most research findings at face value, like the performance results of immersion students in sciences at the senior high level. Furthermore, we must realize that as educators we are often working against peer group pressure and the pressure of the curriculum. We also have the situation where some students, who have been in immersion from Kindergarten to Grade 9, simply challenge the French 10, 20, and 30 exams, often with great success. This then sets them up in Grade 10 with 15 credits. They think that this is their reward.

We have worked very closely with CPF, both with our local chapter and at the provincial level. Their work in the community to support second language programs has resulted in a number of scholarships, support for second language professional development, and material acquisition. In looking to the future of immersion programs, it is fundamental that we talk about financial supports. The grant for French immersion students has been declining. We have found ourselves challenged to keep up with the cost of French immersion materials, whether they be structural materials or library materials. Our CPF local chapter and our parents save the day, quite honestly, by the virtue of the time they put into fundraising. The money they contribute to our adopt-a-book programs for the library or things that tack on to an already over-extended budget is invaluable. These parents have been willing to pay the extra costs. It is difficult to build a long-term program when you're only as good as your last bake sale.

I feel that there has been a decreasing interest at both the federal and the provincial levels, to recognize the long-term sustained financing required to make these programs viable. They speak the rhetoric, but fail to deliver the financial resources. The other factors that happen between peers and between families tell a disappointing tale. I don't think my enrolment statistics are really anything out of the ordinary compared to national or provincial trends in immersion. Fifty percent of my enrolment at the elementary level is in immersion. If you look at my Kindergarten classes, half are English, the other half, French immersion. But by the time we get to high school, immersion is only ten percent of enrolment. So over those nine years we see a serious decline.

Also, we have some unsympathetic English teachers who have complained that students who leave French immersion programs and enter English are now in some way special education students: students who require extra resources. We are also accused of only taking the elite

students into immersion, but I have evaluated students in immersion who struggle just to pass, acquiring a language along the way. So there are other benefits that are not really given an equal acknowledgment by professional staff.

These are some of the issues that we have faced and I'm sure that they've been repeated around the province. We have had some very hostile meetings in our community with people, whose reasons for coming are probably deeply personal, coming to French immersion meetings to espouse the unilingual point of view. They are almost paranoid, feeling the threat of languages they do not understand; using the cover of a candid debate, they refer to the B and B Commission, or something Trudeau did when he was a teenager. I've heard the most ridiculous statements and observed irrational behaviors at public meetings. To avoid such outbursts, the board has implemented a very deliberate strategy. It has refused to hold such meetings during the last five or six years. The Board receives input via a Languages Program Committee made up of teachers of both languages, parents and central office staff. Nevertheless, one must have a thick skin, if we're doing this.

Now we must look to the future of French immersion. I'm getting the sad feeling that the novelty or the fad is wearing thin for some. It takes a long-term commitment; it takes multiple generations of support as children go through the system, decades and decades. We now have some students who have gone through the system, and they are very proficient in the language. I'm worried that in the culture of this small, English speaking town in Alberta, where you have to negotiate with your cable provider to get French cable to come in, where everything is a challenge or a hurdle or an extra financial commitment, that there will not be the determination to carry on. There have been many changes in Alberta society in the last decade, and sometimes people just don't want this to be one more. "Let's go back to the regular program. We won't have all of these worries," they say. So then it becomes a war of attrition.

I have no doubt in my mind that the teachers we have are among our best teachers; they're competent; they're fluent. The thing that antagonizes some Anglophone teachers, is that French immersion teachers tend to be passionate. They are selling a language, they're selling a culture, they have a fervor. Some of my French immersion teachers will work all sorts of extra hours with their students and plan field trips. And English teachers say, "Hey, you're making me look bad." I've got a situation right now. The English teachers in junior high are critical of their colleagues who took a group to Quebec last year. "What about us?" And I say, "Well, why don't you go to London, England?" All kidding aside, these are real tensions.

In a small English speaking community, those English teachers talk to their neighbours and pass along their bias. So regrettably these are things that you have to work with. I'm not so sure how you overcome this colleague-to-colleague tension. Immersion is a bonafide program but yet some English teachers are concerned for their own jobs. That is something that you have to be aware of, if you are going to take this issue on. Some of my staff think of immersion as a loss of English jobs. In their minds, where the superintendents used to hire English teachers for Grade 1 they now hire immersion teachers. In my mind they're all teachers. They all belong to the ATA. There are undercurrent issues related to professionalism in this area.

Where do we go with government? We need to continue to remind them that the program needs support and improvements, and that this will require extraordinary funding. If you are going

to put an elementary library in a French immersion school, there will be extra costs. Some of us are fortunate, because we have contacts back East who have access to French language software at reasonable prices. We buy through a school board, through friends from the old days so to speak. But once again, what I'm saying is that you have to have a survival mentality to get the basics for an immersion program, like picking up a catalogue and finding materials at a fair price. We must also encourage Anglophone parents to buy French books for the home library to encourage literacy—at two or three times the price of English books. These are the challenges that our current funding structure fails to acknowledge. We need to constantly remind government that what we are doing with immersion programs will pay off for the students and the province of Alberta.

In concluding, I think that is about as much as I have to share with you.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

Building the Future: The Role of the Senior District Administrator

JUDY GRIGAT

I'd like to start by describing Grande-Yellowhead Regional Division. We are scattered along Highway 16, from about a hundred kilometres west of Edmonton to the B.C. border, then north to Grande Cache, about an hour and a half north of Hinton, and then south to Robb.

Within our district, the distance, the diverse nature, and the population of the various urban centres present some challenges. We have schools with enrolments of only 14 pupils, schools as large as 815 pupils, and every size in between. We have Kindergarten to Grade 4 schools, Kindergarten to Grade 5, Kindergarten to Grade 6, and so on. The diversity of schools really does present a challenge. We have two fairly large urban centres: Hinton is a city of ten thousand, Edson serves an area of about the same size, although it is spread out a bit more. Then we have smaller towns with between 500 and 900 students, and then there are the rural areas.

Within our system, we offer French immersion in the two larger centres: Hinton and Edson. The very fact that we offer immersion in a geographic region like ours presents challenges, because communities outside of Hinton and Edson see it, and they want it, too. A town the size of Hinton or Edson can easily sustain a program, but a town the size of Grande Cache, which has a student population of about 900 or 1,000, could sustain an alternate program. However, our experience has been very negative in these communities. They tend to tear themselves apart, becoming very political and very emotional. It puts us, as district administrators, in a difficult situation. We have the French immersion people saying: "We like this. Help us. Don't you support this?" and we have to say, "Yes, of course we do." And we have English program parents saying, "Don't let them do that, it will destroy our school, it will destroy our programs. Don't you support our schools?" So we have to walk a fine line.

Two examples with smaller centres: Evansburg and Jasper. Evansburg attempted to establish a program, and I wouldn't want to go through that kind of situation again. Jasper has as well, and that situation is very similar to what Brian Callaghan just described. They had no French education at all and the compromise was the implementation of a solid core French program. In Jasper right now, the CPF chapter has reactivated and there is another push to establish French immersion.

So that is the challenge we face as a diverse geographic area. I think we had our eyes closed to that challenge when we implemented programs initially. I shouldn't even say "we", because at that time I was at the school level. I was the parent of a child who was about to enter school, and I was determined that there would be French language instruction for my child. It didn't matter what the obstacles were; as a parent, I wanted it. As a school-based administrator in a large school at the time, I knew we could sustain it.

But as you walk down that path to establish French immersion programs, other issues crop up, things you never even considered as problems. There is an example within the two centres where we have several schools. In Hinton, there is a competition for students, because we have three Kindergarten to Grade 7 schools. This presents some interesting obstacles. The system offers French immersion in one of the three schools. The school that offers it feels that French immersion should be offered to every parent of every child who registers in our system. But the two schools that don't have immersion are reluctant to tell new parents about it for fear of losing their own enrolments. So the only enrolment in French immersion after Kindergarten/Grade 1 is quite limited, generally restricted to families who reside in the attendance area of the school offering the program, and that's a real disadvantage to the community as a whole.

Some of the experiences Brian mentioned about moving to the next level are similar to ours, too. Because we have three Kindergarten to Grade 7 schools in one community, all the students then go to a grades 8 to12 high school. Initially, as the immersion students moved up into grades 5, 6 and 7, the high school started to panic. This situation was in the growth days. We started out with a small class, then we doubled its size. The numbers were big. I'm sure that many English program teachers saw themselves being laid off or being sent to Quebec to have to learn French. The negative publicity was a significant factor in why our enrolment has dropped; we know that.

After the immersion students moved into the school, we talked to English program parents. Once they realized that teachers weren't losing their jobs nor were they being sent to Quebec nor to France nor to Hell, the parents calmed down. The group of English program parents who were influential then began to ask for a late or middle immersion program. But we are not big enough to sustain all those entry points. We did allow a few students to enter the program in later grades to accommodate the wishes of a few parents who had just been scared to death initially by talking to other staff who were fearful and who were spreading that fear.

In Edson we have four elementary schools, a junior high school and a high school, and that has presented a challenge for us. The program in Edson is too scattered, across three schools. At the elementary schools, immersion students make up about half of the population. In the junior high school they are about one-fifth or one-sixth of the school population. In high school, they are just a tiny little drop in the bucket. So, as students move into high school, it becomes a real challenge for us to offer a program that provides a sufficient percentage of instruction in French. The best we are able to do is offer a maintenance program, so that their French does not deteriorate.

Our administrators are wonderful in the way they put programs together. Brian Callaghan was talking about providing some soft options. We've done that sort of thing. We've done a lot of combining courses, and we're fortunate that our teachers haven't been scared off, at least not so far. We offer humanities as a full-year course giving the students ten credits per year.

We look for teachers who are bilingual enough to teach in French, and while we haven't been wildly successful, these last two years have been much better. When we can hire a bilingual teacher to teach a subject, such as physics, in either English or French, we do. That way, when the immersion students get to high school and they want physics in French, we can offer it. We are starting to do that more and more. Last year, we had seventeen or eighteen French immersion

students enrolled in a class that included Math 10/20/30 and Math 13/23/33. The students got a good math program, but that kind of combination takes a very special teacher.

Another key factor for supporting French immersion programs is ensuring that there is support at the central office level. You are here, so your districts would seem to have that level of support already, but I know that in many systems there are programs handled solely by the principal, with little or no knowledge at the central administration level. We had that problem in our system at one time. For example, before 1983, school administrators had an idea that there was money for French immersion, but there was little support for, encouragement for, or interest in, the French immersion program at the system level. All of the French program grants at that time just went into general revenue. This was distributed to schools, but not identified specifically for use in French immersion. When I moved into central administration in 1983, I began to find out exactly what was available to support French immersion. So I encouraged our principals to become politically active, and since then we have put all the money that the French programs have generated by French language instruction grants into one pot, to be used specifically for French language programming. This move has been very positive for our programs.

Prior to the change in funding framework, it was easy to raise taxes. At a quarter of a mil increase in the tax rate, with our tax base we could have almost anything we wanted. So transportation was no problem, low enrolments were no problem, aides in the early grades were no problem. Unfortunately, with the change in the way education was funded from the provincial level, all that disappeared. Fortunately, the French grants have helped us maintain vitality in our programs. Our principals have always done the planning for the use of the funds and, as we moved more towards site-based decision-making, have agreed to keep our grants central. This agreement has been positive for our system; when new principals come in, they can't take us off in different directions, because we have a set of principles under which that grant is administered.

We have always said our primary focus will be the promotion of French language learning, period. Not French immersion language learning, but French language learning. Because core French does generate some of the federal grant money and it is all in the pot, if there is a time when we need to take care of core French, we do. That keeps the rest of our principals satisfied, too. We also said that the whole program has to be maintained. A strong program at the Kindergarten level is equally as important as a strong program at the high school level. For the benefit of everybody, we make decisions based on those principles.

Our principals work very well together; they are wonderful. The elementary schools that generate most of the money—because that is where most of the students are—will comment: "We know we generate all this. We could take our money and run, but it does us no good in terms of attracting enrolment if there isn't a secondary program." So out of that pool of money, they have done things to support the high schools. We want to keep politics out of budgeting as much as possible, so we don't want to take away from what is available for the English program. We use the French grants to ensure that doesn't happen. For example, we have always been able to pay for program expansion through expansion and development grants. And rather than making the school come up with the matching dollars, which we'd have to take out of English funding, making lots of people mad, we have taken it out of the French grant. If the students don't generate enough income in the school because the numbers are too small, we have taken that extra .3 or .5 teacher cost out

of the French grant. We are sure we always have enough credits offered to enable our students to earn a bilingual diploma.

One of the things we haven't done as much as we could have is to use our parents and specifically CPF. It isn't because we don't want to, but because of instability within the parent groups themselves. The initial CPF group that had to encourage the board to offer the program—and initially our program was only approved from Kindergarten to Grade 6, by the way—was the same group that had to encourage our board to offer a secondary program. By the time they had done all that encouraging, they were pretty tired. So there was a lull for a time. We now have a new group of parents who are looking for ways to enhance the program for the children. As they have become part of the group that meets to plan for the expenditures, they are saying. "Don't spend your money on that, we'll do that for you." So that's very positive for us.

Like Brian Callaghan, I think that one of the best supports I can offer to the program is that my children have been through it. Certainly I have to walk a very careful path, because I was their school principal when my children were in the program, but I can talk about French immersion both pedagogically and in parent language. Sometimes, when it is your child experiencing difficulties, your parental anxiety tends to throw pedagogy out the window.

One of the things I do now is to encourage the immersion schools, whenever they have an opening, to advertise for bilingual staff, so they're positioned to offer whatever might come about. If you are replacing your secretary, why not look for a bilingual secretary? That has been successful to varying degrees at different times.

But overall, I think pooling money to support the total program has been what has saved our programs to the greatest extent. It has kept them vibrant and healthy. Well, actually I have to touch wood and cross everything I can cross; we went through a slump just as the province did. Our enrolments followed the enrolments in the province. This year we are peaking, and we see that the interest is stronger right now for next year's programs than it has been in a long time. So I think we are starting to climb again, and that is a very encouraging sign because we've come through some difficult years of lower Kindergarten/Grade 1 enrolments.

And I'll stop there.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

Building the Future: The Role of the Senior District Administrator

Rick St. Arnaud

I am a product of the Edmonton Catholic School system. I was raised in Falher, Alberta. My first language was French. I didn't speak a word of English until I was ten years of age. I can remember moving to Edmonton and going to Sacred Heart School. The child next door was Ukrainian, but he could speak English. I didn't have the benefit of going through English as a second language, but luckily I went through Sacred Heart School, an English school with a French program. I went through Sacred Heart, and then my father thought it would be wise to send me away from home for a while, so I went to St. Boniface College in St. Boniface, Manitoba. The instruction there was all in French.

When I started teaching French immersion didn't exist, and I didn't consider teaching French as a second language [FSL or core French]. I taught Social Studies. It wasn't until I had been in the district for a while that I applied for a principalship. The person who approached me said, "Rick, you speak French. How would you like to be a principal in a French immersion school?" "What are you talking about?" I said. So I was appointed as principal of St. Thomas Aquinas School, which was situated where *La Cité francophone* is today. It was an old rattletrap building. But, starting as a principal there, I had the most fantastic place in the world to work, because of the people I worked with. That is really what it is all about. There was great enthusiasm on the part of the French immersion teachers, some of whom I still run into periodically.

I have an interest in French immersion, of course, because of the different roles I have played: as a principal of French immersion, and now in the Edmonton Catholic School Division's central office. We have eight schools involved in French immersion, at all levels from Kindergarten to Grade 9. Three of our schools are dual track schools: two elementary schools and one junior high. The other schools are all single track schools. One of the significant accomplishments for us in the past couple of years has been the success we've had in moving more students into high school, although we are still struggling. Some four or five years ago, when I was an area superintendent, a motion was put to the board to close the senior high program at École J.H. Picard School. We had 70 students in high school then. We were given a period of time to increase the enrolment of the school. If I'm correct, the enrolment at École J.H. Picard School is now at 190 students at the high school level. So, certainly, it has been rewarding for our hard working people.

In my handout [not available here] I listed our French immersion enrolments. You'll notice that the enrolment is very constant and represents 8% of our population. Enrolments have gone down a little from 2,652 students, which is a concern if you look at each school.

What I thought I would do is address some of the things, and how they work in terms of the Edmonton Catholic School Division. When I look through our policy manuals, I find no formal policies at all for French immersion. There is support for French immersion, though, through informal policies and practices. There is support for French immersion throughout our division.

I guess when you are in a city, you are fortunate in a way; you have candidates that want to apply for teaching positions because they want to come to, or stay in, a larger urban centre. We are also fortunate that we have many staff who can speak and interview in French, so right away we have a test of proficiency which is certainly important. We have a good working relationship with the Faculté Saint-Jean and that helps, as well. We also have some of our French immersion graduates teaching in our division and I think that speaks well for the division.

It was interesting, when I was listening to Dr. Halsall yesterday. She was talking about some of the research on proficiency in French of Francophones, Anglophones, and so on. We had some Anglophone teachers who have a high degree of proficiency in speaking and writing French. It is not always necessary to have Francophone teachers.

Some of the things we've done to try to support the program, and it may be the same in other jurisdictions, include having the busing rates the same for everybody in our division; it doesn't matter if the student is in a regular, French immersion, or bilingual (Ukrainian or Polish) program.

The introduction of English Language Arts is something that we have looked at over the years. We have always begun in Grade 2. About four or five years ago, we tried a pilot project where we started at Grade 1 for English Language Arts; we have dropped it. Schools will continue with the introduction of English Language Arts in Grade 2. And that's a matter of giving the students a fair start in terms of the French acquisition. I think some of the research showed yesterday that they'll pick English up before long.

We have a resource centre, which contains teacher resource manuals, student resources, videos and so on, and it has been very successful. It is located at the St. Anthony Resource Centre in the Old Strathcona area. Certainly it is a place where teachers can come.

I think one of the things that has been significant for French immersion is the federal French language grant. It is interesting to listen to Judy Grigat saying that they have always been able to work with those grants and have access to them. Until about three years ago, our federal French language grants from Alberta Education were put in a pool and just distributed to all schools. About three years ago, we started to do some work, partly with parents and administrators. Those grants are to be earmarked for French immersion. We have been very fortunate; we have been able to get these grants and $200,000 has been put aside strictly for French immersion programs. In working with the principals, I think we have been able to develop an understanding of what these grants are for. It hasn't always been easy, but there have certainly been some understandings. There is, as well, support from central office, which Judy was talking about. We have been able to work with the administrators and it is the support of the administrators in French immersion that assure the grants are effectively used.

I'll give you a bit of a breakdown as to what we've done with our grant. We have, and it is something we've had for a long time in our division, a full time French immersion consultant, presently Aline Brault. Aline, by the way, was involved on the Steering Committee for this conference.

Two years ago, we looked at the grants and, working with the principals, said, "OK, there are areas where we have to do some work." So we brought in one of our teachers, Nicole Beaudoin from St. Cecilia Junior High, to work as a facilitator in the areas of Math and Science. The facilitator/consultant works with the teachers in the classroom. That has certainly been very productive.

The $200,000 set aside more than pays for the salaries and operating budget for the consultants. The rest of the dollars go to the school for resources. But on top of that, as a division, we know that language programs do need extra dollars when it comes to the acquisition of resources. So in our language programs we have earmarked $15 dollars for each of the students in all of our schools. For example, in our Polish program we have about 200 students. They get 200 x $15 to buy resources. We've done the same with French immersion. These extra funds are from the general pooling, not from the French immersion grant but from the general grants we get from Alberta Education. We certainly see that the amounts of these grants have gone down. Like anything else, you fear the loss of those grants, because it would hurt.

Many years ago now, in Edmonton Catholic, we organized SWAC (a system-wide advisory committee for French immersion parents). They meet regularly; some of you may have gone to some of those meetings over the years. There is always a trustee, there are principals from the schools, and there are parents in attendance. What they do is to work in support of the French immersion program. They are probably the strongest group in advocating that French language grants be moved into a separate pot only for use of the French immersion programs. We worked closely with this group. We certainly appreciated the support that we have received from SWAC over the years. Of course it means that people have to go to evening meetings, but sometimes it is one of those things. If it is something you believe in, you go.

Our French immersion administrators meet regularly: the third Wednesday of every month. I'm just trying to give you some examples of the things that they do to support the program. Except for one junior high school principal, whose assistant principal attends the meeting, all our administrators are Francophone or speak French.

Publicity is certainly one thing that we have to keep working at, and I think that is where the support from SWAC really comes in. When I say that the support comes in from parents and students, I really believe it. When parents feel good about the program they will keep supporting the program. The support that we get from the SWAC and the work that is done through the director of communications in our division certainly helps. Sometimes it is the little things: it's the t-shirts that are in French, for example. It is a sign that people will see at least. There was an interesting presentation yesterday on special needs students in French immersion. I can remember advising some students in Grade 1—not advising the child but advising the parent—to move the student to the English program. Of course, that was way back when. Now there are many youngsters with special needs, so we certainly have to provide the assistance, and we've been lucky. For example, one of our psychologists is fluent in French.

I think that we have to ensure the viability of programs. There is often a feeling on the part of some parents that at the Grade 9 level their child should drop out, because of trying to get into university. It is tough and very competitive to get into certain areas, but having an academic orientation means to ensure that our students going through the French immersion program can

compete with any student. So we have done a lot of work in our division. Whether or not we like Achievement Exam results or Diploma Exam results, we are working with the French immersion teachers and administrators to analyse the results. Not just to get a number crunch. Anybody can do that, but what we can do in teaching practices and so on. It is not always easy work, but you have to ensure that the program can meet the needs of the students. If it can't, I believe that is where we will start seeing a greater drop-off rate.

I've mentioned funding. In terms of future viability, don't take anything for granted; there is competition out there. I think all of us have seen the drop in French as a second language [FSL or core French] in our schools. It is interesting, as I think Brian Callaghan mentioned, that you get the students who come out of Grade 9 and challenge the French courses for 15 easy credits, and that has certainly affected the high school program drastically.

I think that the whole collaborative nature of working with people in French immersion in and around Edmonton will help to ensure the future.

Thank you.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

Building the Future: The Role of the Trustee

Phyllis Kobasiuk

I am no longer a trustee. I served for nine years as a trustee in Parkland, but I am now involved at the municipal level of government as Reeve for Parkland County.

French immersion has been such a fabulous experience for my children, that even though my stay here today must be short due to another commitment, I felt I wanted to participate on the panel. I am 100% committed to French immersion programming. It has been the best thing that has happened to my daughters' education and has opened doors, cultural doors. My older daughter is in her thirteenth year of French immersion. The program has also allowed her to take German next year, possibly in Germany through an exchange program with high school.

The number of doors that learning second languages has opened has been tremendous. So even though I am no longer a trustee, I am totally committed which you will be able to tell from my comments here today.

Later, I will hand out a document [see handout following this speech] on my presentation today

What I am going to be talking about is a best practice. This is a Steering Committee that was established in Parkland Division to study French immersion for possible improvements. I think it worked well, and Parkland has promised to monitor and promote this committee's work. That's where my focus is, as I believe it to be a best practice.

School boards offering French immersion programs must respond to the needs of parents on behalf of their students in an effort to ensure sustainability and vitality of this proven program that prepares our children to meet the global opportunities of the next millennium.

Program needs are best identified by parents in concert with teachers, as student goals and successes are achieved. Proactive parents participate as executive members of individual school councils and come prepared with workable solutions identified through ongoing parent/teacher consultation.

The Parkland School Division French Immersion Steering Committee process stemmed from a level of trust, open communication, and a purposeful desire to act in a timely manner to address potential detraction from the program. Parents in the community had a sense and level of comfort that their elected trustee representatives were, in fact, advocates for the quality of education in this program that they had come to expect for their children. These parents were diligent supporters who chose to place their children in second language programs. They acted as tenacious, informed, active players in their children's education. They saw the big picture. They were broad thinkers who have a strong sense for the critical role education holds in the global context. Subsequently, the role of trustees, in support of this mindset, had to nurture a Board of

Education culture within that framework. A sense of program expectations, based on expressed parent community values, needed to exist.

Leading up to the establishment of the French Immersion Steering Committee, trustees and the board had developed a workable level of communication built on:

- Annual presentations to the board involving Canadian Parents for French addressing local interests such as upcoming sponsored public speaking events, student exchange programs and other celebrations of program success.
- ASBABE membership maintained on an annual basis, particularly as a means of keeping up-to-date on provincial or federal funding shifts or improvements.
- School council attendance by trustees to support parents and the councils, and to liaise or carry through with the board and staff.
- A formal committee structure promoting its meaningful partnership with all school councils in the district whereby parents of school councils drive the agenda.

Ongoing awareness is also nurtured through the local media about exchange programs like NACEL, whereby parents and trustees host French and other European students. A board policy should also, hopefully, be in place to promote second language, extracurricular opportunities for students. Muriel Dunnigan talked about the role of trustees in governance. Trustees can also participate and be aware of programs such as NACEL. I have brought five students from France to my home over five years, each for one month. And I think it's fabulous for your own children. The children come to learn and improve their English skills and create awareness in other people in the community.

Also, eager parents fresh to the education system with children in playschools need to be informed of the benefits and successes through a planned strategy by enthusiastic French immersion program parents. Myself, I became involved, although I didn't really intend to put my children in French immersion. But I had a young daughter for whom the program was, I felt, suitable. French immersion offered half-day programs that I believe are very good for young children. The English program, which is very close to our home, offered two full days, which wasn't suitable for a four-and-a-half-year-old child. I thought I could be involved. I sat on the executive as the vice-president. We needed to establish the program, so I become involved that way.

Parents at the playschool are the ones that need to be aware. Once their children are in Kindergarten they tend to be sort of fitting into the English program. Parents at the playschool level are very keen, interested, and open-minded to their children's education. They need to be approached by enthusiastic French immersion supporters.

So you ask the question: at what point was it deemed necessary to structure the review of possible improvements to the French immersion program? French immersion had been introduced in Parkland County in the late 1970s. By 1985, parents in Stony Plain and the surrounding rural communities were seeking closer identity and involvement with French immersion programs that were more accessible, rather that going the longer distance to Spruce Grove. There were sufficient enrolments, and commitment by parents, to work towards establishment of a viable program in Stony Plain. They wanted to see something in their own community. We have a large jurisdiction,

even more so with regionalization. We have parents that think: "While I'd like to put my child in French immersion, that means two hours busing to Spruce Grove." Parents did do that because they were committed, but you need something a little closer to their communities than that.

Then, when the lead program in Spruce Grove began to show signs of enrolment fluctuation in 1995, parents began examining why its offshoot in Stony Plain, in contrast, was experiencing growth and sustainability. It was then that the Steering Committee was supported by the board as a means to establish a mandate for a program review and recommendations for consideration and action. It was believed that membership on the committee needed to include stakeholders who had conviction and experience in the program, and those who had eyes and ears in the community. Membership included teaching staff, administration, and Canadian Parents for French. An efficient agenda, timelines, and means to measure outcomes, according to the committee mandate, ensured that the desired results would be achieved, so that the board would be in a sound position to make the important decisions for improving the program. Committee members further agreed to follow-up once the board's recommendation had been made. Several factors contributed to the success of the entire effort. Communication was built on a trusting partnership that, in turn, grew out of a sincere desire to meet individual student needs. The larger partnership hinged on parent support, teacher program delivery, the support of the school principal and the school council, central office administrative guidance, and the trustee/board commitment to policy and adherence to meeting client needs. By that I mean there is whole broad range of involvement, all the way from the trustees setting policy to parents' support and commitment. That is very important.

Once this framework was established, annual monitoring by the Superintendent and the board was seen to be important to long-term sustainability and growth of the French immersion program in the jurisdiction.

In the document that I am distributing there is a list of the final recommendations of the Steering Committee, as well as a list of the final recommendations for the meeting of the board that was held in June 1998.

The board was able to follow-up in a timely fashion to meet the needs that were communicated by the steering committee process. Also, since I was a parent of a graduating French immersion student, I consulted with my daughter. We don't always ask students how they feel about things; I think it is really important that we have a good sense of their input. They are very knowledgeable. They know how they feel about things, and when they have had a chance to observe French immersion or any other program for a number of years, they can see things clearly and with a worthwhile perspective that we as trustees should be listening to.

In this discussion, my daughter provided many insights.

Overall, the French immersion program should be an attractive, appealing program choice for students who want to participate and remain enrolled, not simply because they feel obligated to their parents or teacher to complete French Language Arts, for there are other reasons that they should feel they want to be involved in French immersion.

The high school program, of course, should offer French Language Arts, Social Studies, and Math by fully qualified instructors, whose first language is French. That is preferred, but not cast in stone. My daughter has told me that teachers who are dedicated to the success of French immersion studies are instructors of choice. Students know quality language, they value good French language skills and they appreciate teachers with these skills.

Also, planned educational tours or field trips prove beneficial for a variety of reasons, primarily because the result is the community sees the benefits, and the element of parent support and volunteerism creates enthusiasm, camaraderie and support amongst the families involved. French immersion programs of study must be vibrant and enticing for students who are keen to learn and see benefit in the challenge. We recognized that tours within Canada and in Europe involve planning on the part of the teachers and parents, but this creates a real-life bonus for students who seek second language cultural awareness. Reciprocal exchange programs involving French immersion students promote the benefit of French immersion studies.

A third point, which I believe is important, is that we need to ensure locally elected trustees support, and are knowledgeable about, the program. The community needs are best addressed in partnership with trustees, teachers and administration. On the Parkland School Division board right now there are no parents who have had students enrolled in French immersion. They need the opportunity to be aware of what the program involves, they need also to hear from the parents who are advocates and who feel this program is vitally important to the division's education system. They need to hear from parents; otherwise they won't have a full appreciation of the program. After all, it is the trustees who are the decision-makers sitting around the table. When there is a presentation about French immersion, it's really important that parents seek out trustees or that trustees seek out parents and students of French immersion and just say, "Tell me why you think this is beneficial. Explain the benefits to me. How do the students feel about it?" It's really important to gain their perspective.

Also, a high school French immersion certificate pays tribute to the commitment made by students over thirteen years of study in French immersion, and that recognition is something the education system and school board can offer students for their commitment.

High school novel study needs to be of higher calibre. The present novel vocabulary is particularly advanced in a context of storylines that are too simple. Students are seeking improved quality in the novels that are chosen, that's really important.

Most of all I believe French immersion should be fun for the students involved. The French language and culture have many benefits for students and families. Learning in French offers much to enjoy.

And with that, I will circulate these documents and conclude my presentation.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

Building the Future: The Role of the Trustee

Brian Mitchell

Well, it's been thirty days since the election, just!

I will give you some background. Approximately six years ago, when I was first elected to the school board, I was the only trustee on the board whose children were attending French immersion.

So imagine, if you will, that during the course of the first thirty days as a new trustee on the board, the administration comes to you and says, as per Policy 302, notice of motion is given that the Board of Trustees of the Edmonton Catholic School District will close the senior high portion of École J. H Picard School on completion of the 1992/93 school year. Okay, that was November 10 actually, so it was more like twenty days into the process.

Well, we had some warning that this was coming, and a deadline, of course, because of timelines specified in Policy 302.

So there we were, with this recommendation.

This was a very interesting period. In the way of personal experience, I also sit on the board of the Canadian Council of Social Development, and was in Ottawa for a meeting of that board. So I had the school board secretary fax me the package that would normally be available to board members on Friday. I spent all my spare time that weekend working on a presentation and preparing for the speech I would give at the public meeting of the board on Monday evening. Interestingly enough, the board went in camera, as a result of discussion with the board and the administration, and I was able to persuade them to consider a compromise. That compromise was that the senior high program would remain open for an additional five years only so long as enrolment increased by at least 10% annually—that was the compromise.

Policy 302 had been put in place ten years before by a board that believed that schools and programs ought not to operate if they weren't economical. I am not faulting them, I am simply saying they did what they did in their best wisdom, and you inherit what your forefathers have left as a legacy. That is something you should note, as a trustee! You may want to recommend a different course of action. But if you do, you need to recognize that what you have articulated will still impact your jurisdiction five, ten, fifteen, twenty, in some cases maybe even thirty years hence.

So, in their wisdom the board had passed that policy and the administration was carrying out their responsibility, as they had been instructed by policy. We obtained that agreement and persevered with the program for the next five years.

At the time, there were strong school councils in all the French immersion schools, not the least of which was École J.H. Picard School. Judy Buddle was involved. She was the Secretary-Treasurer. There were great debates going on with the administration about how much French

immersion was costing, and how much it wasn't costing, and how much it was costing the other students. We had school councils writing to each of the other councils saying this was exorbitant, and keeping the French immersion program open for 71 students was taking money from other programs. In fact, that year we dropped to 67 students before the year ended. So, I think the compromise was a really good one.

To make a long story short, in each of the next four years the program increased, not by 10% but, on average, between 20% and 30% except for last year, the fifth year. In fact, last year we only increased by one or two percent. And we had a review last year, because I insisted that every year we review. Since I was the one who had advocated for the 10% minimum, and understood the compromise motion, I felt it was important to review adherence to that agreement on an annual basis.

We had a review last year, and we noted that over the five-year period the enrolment had increased very, very substantially, save for the last year. And I think the current enrolment is approximately 180–200. So the numbers are quite credible.

What should we learn from all of this? We should certainly learn that when boards are setting policy, there is a very clear need to work in harmony with the constituents, with the community whom you represent.

That was the beginning of a very interesting process, because it dealt with the French immersion senior high program. Given the input of the parents over an extended period of time, it still is an interesting process. Not because the board passed a resolution saying five years, 10% etc., but because the parents came forward, said they wanted it, and supported it.

You are all familiar with all encompassing policy manuals. You know, covering everything from soup to nuts in one binder. We had one, too. So, of course, we had all kinds of policies, and they had all been devised as a result of issues that had cropped up in the schools. Fair enough, that is the way policy-making is done. And it was all with good intentions. I'm not denigrating what was done.

In any case, I think we might be reinventing the wheel here. I hope not, but in some ways I think so. Over a period of five years in Edmonton Catholic, in fact, prior to 1992, the board was taking a look at their what responsibilities were, what their role was, and how to carry out that role and those responsibilities. They had gone beyond the school and said we were a corporate entity, a unique organization. We developed our organizational bylaws, and they were approved at the end of the 1989–1992 term by the board of the day. It was a good step, because it allowed us to stop our tampering with the other processes and procedures. We then, of course, looked at that as a guide for us as trustees at the time, because in addition to the policy manual, we now had this organizational bylaw that was much more manageable. We started to work ourselves through the policy governance process.

Some of the time it was a case of two steps forward, one back. Developing our mission statement and customizing our policies under the policy governance model were quite thorough, and it took a long time to do. But under the current policies I can't tell you the same thing wouldn't have happened to the French immersion program because according to our policies, it would be the

responsibility of the administration to be coming to the board and saying, "Look, this situation is not in keeping with policy." There is no doubt in my mind, though, that I wouldn't be that far removed anymore and I don't think the board would, because we would know that there were concerns out there and that our constituents represent a vital sounding board.

We moved on. A public relations team—community relations and marketing—works within SWAC [System-Wide Advisory Committee] now to promote the program. I think we've got some additional work to do on policies. This is our policy governance handbook now, by the way, which replaces the binder. It is about 25 or 30 pages long and some of those pages are blank. There is one policy to turn to if you wanted some ideas on French immersion for example, and it talks about parents and students. It is an executive limitation; there are four categories to policy governance, as some of you probably know. The header on that policy says, "With respect to interactions with parents and students, the superintendent shall not cause or allow conditions, procedure or decisions which are unsafe, unfair or disrespectful, undignified or unnecessarily intrusive, or which fail to provide… etc., etc." So, if a decision were going to be made about French immersion, that kind of decision would be made in consultation with the community and we have no problem interpreting that consultation would occur. So, under those kinds of circumstances, under those criteria, they should never involve political lobbies, so to speak.

It has been a long process, to get to the point of using policy governance as a model; this was approved last February. Now we are learning to live with it. We are all in this together. School councils are on-line now; SWAC is there. We have multiple opportunities to get feedback. The demand is there. We can adjust it if we choose. We are a service industry. We are responsive to the customers.

I am running overtime, so I'll stop there.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

Building the Future: The Role of the Trustee

JOANNE FIEST

I would like to give you a broad picture of trustees' roles, by introducing you to the Alberta School Boards Association for Bilingual Education, or more familiarly known as ASBABE.

ASBABE is a provincial association whose membership is composed of elected trustees. The association promotes the maintenance and enhancement of all learning opportunities in French because Alberta is an integral part of Canada, and because all Albertans must enjoy a fair and equal opportunity to contribute to the Canadian political, economic, and cultural way of life of our bilingual country. The educational merits of a bilingual education are without question.

ASBABE was created over fifteen years ago for the primary purpose of promoting French language education in Alberta. For the first nine to ten years, ASBABE coordinated annual recruitment drives in eastern Canada to entice bilingual teachers to teach in the province's three distinct French language programs. And they are FSL [core French], French immersion, and Francophone. ASBABE, at the time, also provided an orientation for these new teachers to our education system and their new surroundings in Alberta. In the past five years, these orientation programs have not been held, primarily because the teachers we brought to Alberta put down roots and ended up staying here, marrying, and starting their own families. We have also begun to recognize that our own students graduating from Faculté Saint-Jean and other universities had the qualifications we were looking for.

Membership. Membership in ASBABE is open to any school district in the province that offers a French program. A membership fee is paid to the association. We stepped away from that a little bit in the last four years for a couple of reasons. The first reason was the restructuring of education and regionalization of school boards, when school boards were at different phases and district names were changing. We thought that for a year or two we would just hold up until everybody had their new names and then we would start re-introducing the membership fee. Second, ASBABE was in a very strong fiscal position, and for the short term could continue to be viable without charging the membership fees. Every year at our annual general meeting membership fees is part of the agenda; we discuss the current realities and see where we are. I believe that the fees were at $100 per board.

ASBABE and its partners. In education, we know that partnerships are an integral component of our business, but, most importantly, they benefit the students that we serve. To that end ASBABE has many partnerships. The first partnership that we have, which is a natural fit, is with the Alberta School Boards Association, since we are under their umbrella. We also use their strong support system because we serve the same members, and recently we have centralized our business in their office. They look after our financial services, which has really come to be, I think, one of the best moves our executive has made in the past five years. Typically, the books would follow the President so they never had a home. We will now get everything in one place and that will give the association some stability. One of the things that we have recently started working with ASBA on is a data base system for French immersion teachers. We see this, at its very early

stages, as a system where teachers who were looking to work in Alberta would get their name on a résumé type of reference, and where school boards who are looking for specialized assistance in the French immersion area, could find available teachers. So that is one of the areas that ASBABE and ASBA have agreed to develop further in the future.

Of course, our other partnership is with the school district and the trustees. Probably the most positive and strongest feature about ASBABE is that it provides trustees with a unique opportunity to meet and discuss their French language education concerns and also to talk about the successes, which I think is even more important.

Our third partnership is with Canadian Parents for French. Trustees need to interact with parents, and we've certainly heard that today. Our role is very much in sync with parents and should be. ASBABE has historically had a strong link with CPF. Every year at our annual general meetings CPF has a representative, and they provide our group with an update on the issues across the province as they see them. Another example of our partnership with CPF is this conference. Michael Savaryn, our President, has played a very strong leadership role in putting on this successful conference.

Alberta Education is another one of our partners. Recently, ASBABE was asked to sit on an advisory committee for the very successful book, *Yes, You Can Help! A Guide for French Immersion Parents*. I understand this book has now gone national, and if you don't know about it—find out about it. Also, over the past four years, ASBABE has had a representative at the French Immersion Advisory Committee. One of the roles this committee plays is to advise Alberta Education on the Western Canada Protocol and funding issues. For anyone who sat in on the "Funding and Costs" working session this morning, the talk about the French Immersion Advisory Committee and their request for input from this group gives you an idea of our role there. And that gives you a snapshot of ASBABE's involvement with Alberta Education.

Another partnership is the Department of Canadian Heritage in Ottawa. The president of ASBABE receives updates and documents, particularly relating to funding and protocol agreements. So we are kept up to date on emerging issues federally.

Those are just a few examples; I am sure there are more. We are always, as an association, looking for partnerships, and we continue to nurture each one of them.

I wanted to reflect on whom ASBABE assists. Quite simply, we are trustees who want to ensure quality French language programs, and that teachers have the necessary supports required to serve the children in our schools. That is whom ASBABE assists at the end of the day—we're helping to create that linkage.

ASBABE and our challenges. I think most of us know that topping the list of challenges is the current funding levels for French programs. School boards no longer received funding from the provincial government for French language programs, and currently the federal monies are decreasing and teacher funding is uncertain. There continues to be healthy discussions as to the actual cost of French language programs and the variance of costs from district to district. Do we have an advocacy role to play here? I certainly think we do. That would be one of the challenges ASBABE has and will continue to have in the short-term anyway.

Another challenge that I see ASBABE facing is the provincial decline of students enrolling in French immersion, even though some areas are growing. Why is this happening? Is it a perception problem? Is it political agendas? What can be done and what role can ASBABE play?

The third challenge is the future of ASBABE. Where do we go from here? We are like a teenager looking for an identity now. There are challenges that we can grab on to and that we can work with, but we are looking for an identity. As I have said, our focus has been primarily on the French language, but we have had discussions at our past two annual general meetings about expanding to include other languages: Spanish, Italian, Ukrainian, and so on. Do we expand and bring in other languages? That is another philosophical issue that ASBABE will have to look at in the short term.

ASBABE and its future. New leadership and new membership is required. Following the province-wide elections when there are fresh starts and new challenges occurring, now is an appropriate time to consider your involvement. Each November ASBABE holds its annual general meeting in Edmonton. Each board is provided notice and should appoint a board member to attend. When you attend one of our ASBABE general meetings we serve wine and cheese throughout the meeting, creating a French ambiance. It is not formal; it's just a nice time to set direction. ASBABE can do incredible things in the future, but we can't do them without people and input.

CPF SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL
FOR FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

USING THIS TOOL FOR DISCUSSION AND ACTION

This tool has been developed by Canadian Parents for French (CPF), the national network of volunteers which promotes and creates opportunities for young Canadians to learn and use French as a second language.

The self-assessment tool is intended to help schools assess for themselves how their French-second-language (FSL) programs are faring. It is not CPF's intent to collect and compare these assessments, but rather to **encourage a conversation** among all stakeholders about the importance and performance of FSL programs in the local community. Programs and the needs of communities will vary across the country but dialogue among all those involved in and affected by these programs can only lead to improvements in both the FSL programs themselves and the levels of support for them within the school system.

Eighteen indicators are outlined below with brief explanations. School performance in each area can be assessed using a five-point scale. The indicators are based on research done on FSL programs in Canada over the last 30 years. (Please note that for the purposes of this self-assessment tool, FSL programs refer to both immersion and Core French programs.)

The self-assessment tool can be used to assess both French immersion and Core French programs (also known as basic French in some provinces). In order to use it effectively, evaluate only one of these program types at a time. (For example, if you decide to evaluate your Core French program, answer all the questions with only Core French in mind.) You can go back and use the tool to evaluate the other program option(s) at another time and we recommend that you do so in another, separate session.

CPF *Canadian Parents for French*

CPF SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL
FOR FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The suggested way to use this tool is to engage in a large group discussion on the indicators. With all participants gathered (teachers, students, parents, administrators):

1) **READ** the indicators one at a time;

2) **DISCUSS** the level of implementation of each indicator in your school;

3) **COME TO A CONSENSUS** on where your program fits on the implementation scale;

4) **NOTE THE RESULTS** on the assessment results grid.

Once you have considered all the indicators, you will have a picture of your FSL program's strengths and areas for improvement. This tool and the discussions it will involve provide an excellent opportunity to raise issues important for FSL programs and to celebrate program successes. Be proud of your school's strengths and work now to build an action plan in those areas where you feel you need improvement. The discussion itself will be valuable, but you may also want to follow up on certain areas to ensure that next year's assessment is even better!

If you find that a question does not apply to your situation, you may skip it. Be careful however about skipping a question too quickly just because it is easier than trying to answer it. (If your school doesn't rate well on a question, this is no reason to skip it!) There may be areas where you feel that responsibility for the issue does not rest with the school alone (e.g., involvement of the school board). In this case, your school may need to ask where to find support for improvement of this indicator, but the indicator is still important to a quality FSL program.

CPF is committed to supporting you as you undertake this self-assessment process. At our website, **www.cpf.ca**, you will find dedicated resources to assist you, including information on how to gather together a group of stakeholders and how to decide if you need a facilitator; fast facts and current research to help you in your deliberations on each indicator; a list of contacts for your local CPF Branch; an action plan format to help you take the next steps in improving your FSL programs—and much more!

HOW TO ASSESS PERFORMANCE

To assess your school's performance in each area (i.e., for each indicator), establish a rating using the following five-point scale.

RATING	PERFORMANCE
A	VERY STRONG
B	STRONG
C	MODERATE
D	FAIR
E	NEEDS GREAT IMPROVEMENT

A. VERY STRONG: This means that your school's performance in this area is excellent. The indicator has been fully implemented or is being regularly applied and is reviewed regularly for possible corrections or improvements where needed.

B. STRONG: School performance in this area is good. The indicator has been largely implemented but no review process is in place to allow for possible corrections and improvements where needed.

C. MODERATE: The indicator has been partially implemented or some definite progress is being made towards its implementation. The school may be further ahead in some areas than in others.

D. FAIR: A rating of fair would apply when the issue has been explored and there is some acknowledgement of its importance but little or no action has been taken. Issues and/or obstacles preventing full implementation of this indicator may have been identified.

E. NEEDS GREAT IMPROVEMENT: School activity in this area is non-existent (e.g. no formal discussion has occurred and no action has been taken).

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR SCHOOL'S SELF-ASSESSMENT, AND CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR COMMITMENT TO QUALITY FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE PROGRAMS FOR CANADIAN CHILDREN!

DERSTANDING THE INDICATORS

The 18 indicators are grouped under three main themes: enrolment, program quality and accountability. A short text describes each indicator and related issues.

ENROLMENT

This set of indicators focuses on enrolment issues (i.e., ensuring maximum access to FSL programs).

1. **AVAILABILITY. FSL Programs are available to all students, including gifted students and those with special needs.**
   Enrolment in FSL programs is encouraged by policies and practices that provide for the participation of interested students. FSL programs that are available to all students provide free transportation for both urban and rural students and have no program enrolment limits or admission criteria. Programming for gifted and special needs students is also provided within FSL programs to ensure that the programs are available to all students.

2. **COMMUNICATIONS. All FSL options are clearly communicated and promoted.**
   Enrolment in FSL programs is enhanced when parents and students receive relevant information. Effective communication and promotion of FSL programs can be accomplished by holding annual information sessions for prospective parents and by ensuring that informational materials encourage enrolment. Information about FSL options and entry points should be distributed regularly so that informed choices may be made as the student progresses through the educational system.

3. **REMEDIAL ASSISTANCE. All FSL programs provide remedial assistance to students who need it.**
   Students experiencing academic difficulties are retained in FSL programs when they are given extra help. FSL programs should encourage these students to continue their FSL studies by ensuring that adequate remedial services and resources are available to all students who need them.

PROGRAM QUALITY

The second set of indicators encompasses a variety of program quality issues.

4. **FSL POLICIES. FSL policies concerning staffing, resources and funding exist and are evaluated regularly.**
   FSL policies provide an opportunity for the school to state its commitment to providing quality FSL programs, to clearly define the conditions that must be met to achieve quality programs, and to provide a model for evaluating progress toward these goals.

5. **FSL RESOURCES. Sufficient French classroom and library resources and learning materials are available.**
   FSL programs require quality resources and classroom materials. There should be enough French textbooks for all students and a varied collection of resource centre and classroom materials that have been specifically designed for French-second-language learners.

6. **SCHOOL COMMUNITY. The entire school community supports and encourages FSL programs.**
   Quality French-second-language programs thrive where the entire school supports and encourages the use of French. This may mean that the French language and culture are visible in the school outside the classroom in the form of posters or hallway conversations, and in the use of French at recess or during announcements and assemblies.

7. **EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY. Extra-curricular activities in French are available to all FSL students.**
   The use of French for non-school communication has been shown to enhance language mastery for FSL learners. To encourage the use of French outside of the classroom, the school should promote both in-school activities (e.g., clubs, Internet pen pals) and out-of-school activities (e.g., field trips, student exchanges). Parents and students should be informed of the importance and availability of these activities.

8. **QUALIFIED TEACHERS. Qualified teachers, including substitute teachers, are available for all FSL assignments.**
   In order to ensure effective second-language instruction, it is necessary for FSL programs to ensure that all teachers assigned to FSL classes are fluent in French and have received training designed specifically for second-language instructors. The school may want to discuss with the school district the need for a strategy to recruit and retain qualified FSL teachers, and to ensure that qualified substitute teachers are available when needed.

9. **COMPETENCE PROFILE. New teachers are hired on the basis of French-language competence, teaching ability, and subject-matter knowledge.**
   In order to provide quality FSL programs, school administrators must ensure that FSL teachers have the necessary skills to be effective second-language teachers. A competence profile that evaluates French-language competence and teaching ability should be used when selecting new teachers. Teachers hired for subject areas such as math and science in high school immersion classes should also be subject-matter specialists.

10. **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT. Professional development for FSL teachers is supported and encouraged.**
Teachers should be assured of a rich variety of professional development activities designed specifically for FSL teachers. School administrators must encourage and support their participation in these activities.

11. **CORE FRENCH INTEGRATED. Core French is treated as an integral part of the main curriculum.**
(This indicator is only used when reviewing Core French programs.)
Core French is treated as an integral part of the main curriculum when it is given the same importance as other subjects. Timetabling conflicts that put Core French courses in competition with other popular options should be minimized. Core French classes should also be provided with the same level of resource materials as other subjects. Core French is taught in a Core French classroom to provide a supportive environment.

12. **HIGH SCHOOL COURSES. High school programs offer high quality FSL courses that are accessible to all interested students.**
(This indicator is only used when reviewing high school FSL programs.)
Quality high school FSL courses are accessible to all interested students. Timetabling conflicts that put FSL courses in competition with other popular options, and gaps in FSL studies caused by semestering are minimized. Students have been consulted, and the school offers a rich variety of FSL courses that are known to appeal to students.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The final set of indicators focuses on accountability issues.

13. **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT. Parents are involved in decision making about FSL programs.**
Parents are important stakeholders in FSL programs and should be included in FSL decision making. Parents should be encouraged to attend and actively participate in meetings and should be systematically notified when FSL issues are to be considered.

14. **CLASS TIME RESPECTED. The amount of class time dedicated to instruction in French is specified and respected.**
In quality FSL programs, class time dedicated to instruction in French is clearly specified and consistently respected. Teachers are not required to vary the time allotted to French instruction to accommodate other subjects or school activities. Remedial, special education, and gifted programming is equitably distributed across the students' timetables so that students are not systematically removed from French classes. Administrators ensure that guidelines on French instructional time are met.

15. **STABILITY. The types of FSL programs and the grade levels at which students enter programs are stable from year to year.**
FSL programs operate most effectively when they have achieved stability. It is necessary to ensure that stable program funding has been secured so that decisions about the continuation of FSL need not be taken annually. Entry points and the types of FSL programs offered should be maintained from year to year; program changes and reductions of entry points should be avoided.

16. **PROVINCIAL GUIDELINES. Provincial guidelines for FSL programs are communicated directly to parents, teachers, and administrators.**
It is necessary for all stakeholders in FSL education to have timely, accurate information upon which to base decisions and policies. Provincial guidelines should be systematically communicated and made readily available to parents, teachers, and administrators. The guidelines should be reviewed regularly to ensure that FSL programs are responsive to guideline changes.

17. **DESIGNATED FUNDING. All government funding designated for FSL programs is used specifically for those programs.**
In order to develop and maintain quality programs, government funding designated for FSL programs must be used specifically for those programs. School administrators must be aware that these funds exist and ensure that they are not re-directed for other purposes. Records should be kept concerning the use of these funds and these records reviewed to ensure that funds are used effectively.

18. **PROGRAM REVIEW. The quality and effectiveness of FSL programs are assessed regularly and adjustments are made when necessary.**
In order to develop and maintain quality FSL programming, student outcomes in school FSL programs and current FSL research findings must be reviewed regularly. A process should be in place to ensure that FSL policy, practice, and curriculum is adjusted in response to these reviews. Changes to policy, practice, and curriculum should be supported by professional development activities.

CPF SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL
FOR FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

ASSESSMENT RESULTS SUMMARY

MAIN AREA	INDICATOR	PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT				
		A VERY STRONG	B STRONG	C MODERATE	D FAIR	E NEEDS GREAT IMPROVEMENT
ENROLMENT	1 AVAILABILITY					
	2 COMMUNICATIONS					
	3 REMEDIAL ASSISTANCE					
QUALITY	4 FSL POLICIES					
	5 FSL RESOURCES					
	6 SCHOOL COMMUNITY					
	7 EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY					
	8 QUALIFIED TEACHERS					
	9 COMPETENCE PROFILE					
	10 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT					
	11 CORE FRENCH INTEGRATED					
	12 HIGH SCHOOL COURSES					
ACCOUNTABILITY	13 PARENT INVOLVEMENT					
	14 CLASS TIME RESPECTED					
	15 STABILITY					
	16 PROVINCIAL GUIDELINES					
	17 DESIGNATED FUNDING					
	18 PROGRAM REVIEW					

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HOW TO USE THE SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

CPF has produced the following documents on how to use the School Self-Assessment Tool:

- Preparing for the CPF School Self-Assessment Meeting
- Involving Students in the School Self-Assessment Process for French-Second-Language Programs
- Developing Action Plans and Advocacy Strategies

CPF further advises that:

Inevitably, programs and the needs of communities will vary across the country. But CPF believes that communication among all those involved in and affected by FSL programs can only lead to improvements in the programs themselves and the levels of support for them within school systems. CPF encourages schools to adapt the Tool for their particular needs and circumstances as necessary.

More information and updates can be found at
<www.cpf.ca/English/resources/School%20Self/index.htm>

Note: In Alberta, the term "FSL" refers to core French (French taught as a subject). However, in this document the terms "French-second-language programs" and "FSL" refer to French immersion and core French programs collectively.

PREPARING FOR THE CPF SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT MEETING

Recruiting a self-assessment group

Your school self-assessment group should include all stakeholders: core French and French immersion teachers, special education co-ordinators, guidance counsellors, parents and students from both core and immersion FSL programs. This group could include, but should not be limited to parents and staff who are on the School Council or similar body. You can ensure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to participate by putting a notice in the school newsletter or by sending letters to parents and teachers. Don't forget to determine the ways in which students may best participate before the first meeting. [See: INVOLVING STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE PROGRAMS on page 4.]

It is important to emphasize that all participants must be committed to engaging in positive dialogue and to working for positive change. This is not an opportunity to criticize individual teachers, parents, students or principals, nor will results be used to compare schools. Offer the information that background information is available for participants. This will help to reassure parents and students who may be concerned that they lack information about certain aspects of FSL education. Make sure that it is clear that both core and immersion programs will be addressed. Emphasize, as well, that this self-assessment will lead to positive change; action and advocacy plans will be developed and implemented.

Once a group has been established, encourage all participants to prepare for the discussion:

- Distribute the self-assessment tool in advance so that participants have time to think about the issues.
- Encourage all participants to prepare for the discussion by reading the background information on the CPF website. It is a good idea to ensure that at least one or two people make a commitment to review the background material.
- Decide how the School Self-Assessment process will be organized. You could set aside three hours to complete the assessment or hold three shorter sessions to cover one assessment category at a time.
- Meetings to develop and implement your Action/Advocacy Plan should be scheduled after the assessment when participants had an opportunity to think about strategies to address issues identified during the assessment.

Recruiting a Facilitator

It is important that all participants in your school's self-assessment feel comfortable sharing their views and hearing the opinions of others. Parents and students may feel hesitant to express opinions if the principal or a teacher chairs the meeting. Similarly, school staff may feel criticized if a parent is in charge of the process.

These problems can be avoided by recruiting a neutral facilitator. A facilitator can ensure that a non-confrontational atmosphere is maintained so that all stakeholders feel comfortable that their views will be heard and respected. The facilitator may remind participants that they all share a common goal: to effect positive change. A facilitator will also ensure that discussions remain on topic, that all self-assessment indicators are addressed, and that action and advocacy plans are developed.

Facilitators may be recruited from within your community. Here are a few places you may try:

United Way Associations
Non-profit agencies
Social service agencies
Religious organizations
Volunteer Bureau
University and College professors
Police Services

INVOLVING STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR FRECH-SECOND-LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

There are a number of ways in which student participation in the French- Second-Language program school self-assessment process may be organized. Use your best judgment to determine which option best meets the age, maturity and skills of your student body and the needs of the discussion group. You might choose to involve senior high school students in the discussion group and have younger students contribute in different ways. Elementary school students might best be involved only in implementing action plans. Remember to include both core and immersion students in your plans if your school offers both programs.

1. **Focused participation**. Students attend and participate in the discussion of topics to which they may reasonably make a contribution or where they express a particular interest. For example: high school course content.

2. **Indirect participation**. Students respond to a questionnaire to elicit their comments about some or all of the issues in the self-assessment instrument. You will need to choose issues that can reasonably be addressed by your students - the age, maturity and experience of the students should guide your efforts.

3. **Action Plan Participation**. Students are involved only in implementing action plans to address issues identified by the self-assessment. (See **Developing Action Plans and Advocacy Strategies** for suggestions) Again, choose activities and levels of responsibility that reflect the skills and experience of the students.

Here are a few examples of action plan activities in which students could participate; older, more mature students might be able to adopt a leadership role. **Remember to include both core and immersion students in both organization and implementation whenever possible.** This will help you to work toward the goals of indicators 8 and 13 and ensure that students from both programmes have input to the process.

- Students might survey their peers about their opinions about the content of FSL courses. It is important that the principal assign staff or that parents volunteer to work with the students on questionnaire design and to assist with distribution.

- Students can organize or participate in a display of core and immersion student work in communal areas of the school. Staff and/or parents should ensure that the initiative continues throughout the school year and in subsequent years. This might be a good way to start a French Club - students are often motivated to participate in a concrete activity.

- Students might organize or participate in the organization of joint core and immersion extra-curricular activities. Depending on the age and skills of your students, they might:

    a. Respond to a questionnaire about their interests
    b. Research extra-curricular possibilities
    c. Organize an extra-curricular activity for core and immersion students. Staff guidance and approval will be necessary.

- Students could start a French Club; the amount of staff and parent volunteer support required will depend on the age and skills of the students.

DEVELOPING ACTION PLANS AND ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

As your group works through the CPF School Self-Assessment Instrument, you will notice that some indicators identify policies and procedures that are determined at the school board or Department of Education level. In these cases simply complete the assessment instrument as though the school had the responsibility and make a note that someone else has greater control over this indicator. Your action plan around these indicators might include an advocacy component; bringing issues to the attention of those responsible and working with them to effect positive change. The following model is designed to help you to develop action plans to address some of the issues that might arise. **[See Key Principles of Advocacy on page 11.]**

DEVELOPING ACTION PLANS FOR YOUR SCHOOL

You will find that some issues are quickly and simply addressed (for example teachers may volunteer to record hours of instruction in French; students might organize a display of core and immersion projects in a public area of the school), while other issues require a good deal of planning, co-ordination and advocacy to achieve long term goals (for example developing time tables to ensure that choosing immersion and/or core French options does not preclude enrolment in other popular course options; information gathering and advocating for special education and remedial services for immersion students).

Developing a formal Action Plan to identify "next steps" will help bring you that much closer to a better self-assessment next year and may help you to resolve long-standing issues with your FSL programs.

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

PHASE I - PREPARE

Define the issue(s)

You have already defined your advocacy issues by completing the CPF School Self-Assessment Tool and identifying those areas that cannot be addressed at the school level.

Gather Information

Once the key issues have been identified, it is time to gather information. For each issue, the important questions to answer include:

- What, if any, existing resources address the problem?
- Who are the key people to approach for help in rectifying the problem?

To be successful, you must have a thorough knowledge of your surroundings – prevailing attitudes towards the issue(s), types of alternatives, etc.

Who has strong links and influence regarding the issue? Have there been any previous school or board advocacy efforts involving the same or related issue? Find out what strategies were used, who was involved and what the results were.

Identify supporters if advocacy is required

Now that your information has been gathered, it is time to begin identifying potential supporters. [See Supporters Inventory form on page12.] Try to attract support from those who are affected by the issue and from decision-makers who could resolve the issue.

If you are having difficulty gaining support, stop until you have had an opportunity to re-think your issue. Perhaps the circumstances and timing aren't right or your presentation is off-track. Find out!

PHASE 2 - PLAN

Review the issue and identify the preferred solution.

Before developing the Action Plan, review the work carried out in the preparation phase. Start by reviewing the issue: what is it, why is it a problem, who does it affect and how does it affect them?

Now identify the preferred solution. Be as specific as possible. Anticipate possible outcomes of your efforts, defining the changes that will take place, and who and how they will affect. Consider both the desired end and how you wish to influence the awareness and attitudes of

decision-makers. You may wish to state the outcomes you would like to achieve:

- Short term: what is a realistic level to achieve within the next year while continuing to work toward the ideal.
- Long term: if the advocacy effort is successful, what is the ideal condition in the future?

Choose the route

Once the preferred solution has been selected, take stock of resources and identify the appropriate systems, groups and individuals that can make the solution happen.

If advocacy is required, remember that approaching the wrong person in an organization wastes time and causes frustration. Don't expect someone to change something if they have no influence in that area. Reach the people within the organization who actually have the authority to make the changes you are requesting.

- What is their track record on similar issues?
- Who are likely to be your strongest supporters and who are likely to oppose the issue?
- What concerns are most important to the supporters and opponents? How does your issue relate to these concerns? How can you appeal to both groups most effectively?
- Be prepared and anticipate the arguments that might be put forth in opposing your issue. Develop a strategy to counter these arguments. Be able to clearly demonstrate how the issue is creating problems.

Develop the Advocacy Action Plan

You know what the issue is; you know how you want it resolved; and you know whom best to approach to achieve your goal. Now is the time to develop your action plan. [See Action Plan Steps on page 13.]

As you begin to develop your approach, avoid selecting a specific course of action too soon. Brainstorm and be as creative as possible. List every potential strategy and action idea. However set a time limit of 30 minutes, to ensure a concentrated effort.

You have already identified the organizations and individuals to approach in seeking resolution of the issue. As strategies are selected, it is important to understand your target audience to ensure a good fit between your proposals and their goals and philosophy.

Now, select the strategies that will be most effective, keeping in mind that it is often necessary to educate your target group.

In order to achieve a favourable resolution of the issue, you should prepare back-up strategies in case the first plan fails. Be sure to include strategies aimed at reaching non-supporters.

Formalize the action plan and organize its implementation

Start by examining your group with a view to deciding how best to organize, to achieve your goal. You could develop a committee structure and assign each committee a number of tasks or simply assign each task to an individual or small group.

PHASE 3 - ACT (IMPLEMENT THE ACTION PLAN)

The specific steps in the **ACT PHASE** depend on your issue(s). Follow the action steps developed previously. Keep a note about what goes smoothly and what doesn't work, and comment as to why. This information will be useful when evaluating the Plan and for future reference.

If you are advocating for change, remember to take a positive approach while fostering support. Keep your supporters aware of what is happening as interest can wane without follow-up. Timing is critical, so select the opportune moment to put your plan into action. Ideally, try not to compete with other issue(s).

When presenting the issue, find out what process the School Board or Ministry uses to deal with issues. Remember that the process may be time consuming. Be prepared to take additional information to meetings and always take a written brief of your presentation. Include a copy for those to whom you are presenting.

During the presentation be positive and professional. An antagonistic stance will not encourage the decision-makers to react favourably to your issue. Make them feel that it is their issue as well and stress that you have faith in their ability to address the issue. Don't expect a decision right away.

PHASE 4 - IF ALL ELSE FAILS

The best-laid plans of mice and men...despite being prepared, you can still run into roadblocks. Don't drop the issue, but avoid making a personal attack on the individual or group. Acknowledge that you have a difference of opinion and leave the door open for a possible reconciliation.

If your target group denies that the issue is a problem present your facts and figures, point out that your concerns fall under their mandate, and ask them to support their belief that the issue is not a problem.

If your issue is deemed to be of low priority bring your supporters to subsequent meetings, present your facts and, if your assessment group feels it to be appropriate, arrange media coverage.

If you are told that there is no money to address your issue point out that resolving the issue will save money, offer to assist with fundraising and be prepared to find as many funding sources as possible.

If you are experiencing delaying tactics set reasonable deadlines for action and do periodic follow-up and progress checks. If you are asked to join a committee that historically hasn't produced any results, accept the offer and work to add substance and meaning to the committee's activities. Continue to focus on the issue and make constructive suggestions for

resolving it. By offering to cooperate with the decision-makers, you open the door to a positive reception of your issue. Give them a chance to change their minds gracefully.

PHASE 5 - EVALUATE

Review each step in your action/advocacy plan and determine whether it was implemented as it was originally designed. If not, note how the steps were modified and ask the following questions. Was the key issue clearly defined? Was the most appropriate solution chosen? Which strategies worked? Were there adequate resources to carry out the plan? Were the most appropriate advocacy target chosen? Was the timing appropriate? Were the presentations effective? Were decision-makers convinced that change is necessary?

Remember that many first efforts are not successful. Have patience and remember that your efforts will have an effect over time. [See Evaluation Phase on page 14.]

Key Principles of Advocacy

The following principles of advocacy will greatly enhance your chances for a successful resolution.

1. Know your case and document your facts.
2. Whenever possible, ensure that you are familiar with current policies.
3. Know opposing cases and arguments and develop a strategy for countering them. You may find that role-playing will help you to refine your strategies.
4. Advocacy by coalition requires effective collaboration. Ensure that each person has a clearly defined role and that communication within your group is timely and effective.
5. Know your resources and allies. Consult these people, inform them of your issues and enlist their assistance.
6. Intervene at a level that is high enough to get the job done.
7. Take a positive approach. Assume good will on the part of the system and communicate this assumption to those within the system. Use positive documentation and give credit where it is due. Whenever possible, recruit those within the system to your cause.
8. Demonstrate to those in the system the ways in which system interferes with or defeats its own goals.
9. Never engage in an overt power struggle without the agreement of your planning group.
10. Always be aware of the vulnerability of those within your group. The group must assess risks and weigh them carefully against possible gains before choosing confrontation.

SUPPORTERS' INVENTORY

Consumers
(Those affected by the issue)

Currently supportive?
YES NO

_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___

Decision-Makers
(Those whose decisions could resolve the issue)

_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___

Legitimizers
(Those whose 'stamp of approval' would be helpful)

_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___

General Public
(Groups and individuals who may be interested in the issue)

_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___

ACTION PLAN STEPS

ISSUE: _____

GROUPS	STRATEGIES	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES
CONSUMERS				
DECISION MAKERS				
LEGITIMIZERS				
GENERAL PUBLIC				

EVALUATION PHASE

ISSUE:_____

DATE: _____

PREFERRED SOLUTION:

_____
_____
_____
____

LIST OF QUESTIONS	POSITIVE CHANGE	NO CHANGE	NEGATIVE CHANGE	COMMENTS

Appendix E

- Brault, Aline, Marcel Lavallée, Robert Martin, and Alain Nogue. **"A French Immersion School Culture: The Foundation for Success."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999. Reprinted with permission.

- Hampton, Wayne, Emilie Keane, and Donna Waraksa. **"Building the Future: The Role of the School Administrator."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999. Reprinted with permission.

- Wurst, Anita, and Bill Brownlee. **"Creating English-French Immersion Harmony in Dual Track Schools: Canadian Rockies District Task Force."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report.* Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000. Reprinted with permission.

- Mayne, Lise, and Wayne Hampton. **"Understanding the French Immersion Teacher: Implications for Training, Hiring, Supervising, and Supporting Your French Immersion Staff."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report.* Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000. Reprinted with permission.

BACKGROUNDER

A French Immersion School Culture: The Foundation for Success

General Considerations

Schools offering immersion programs differ from regular schools in that they require children to learn concepts, skills and attitudes in French at the same time as they are acquiring the language itself. In immersion, the second language used by children to negotiate and structure meanings becomes a primary focus of the teaching-learning process. This significant difference between regular and immersion schooling must be accounted for when defining, planning and creating the school environment. In other words, the culture in a school offering an immersion program cannot be a carbon copy of the culture that exists in a school where the language of instruction is the language of the home and of the community at large.

In the context of this presentation, school culture is defined as the interplay of elements, forces and people that constitute an effective learning environment. The immersion school culture must enable children to be and to learn in a meaningful, rich and secure second-language-learning world. A person learning a language in the real world is encapsulated, so to speak, in contexts that provide meaning and support his learning. An effective immersion school culture must compensate for many of the elements and forces that naturally define the normal language learning process. It is precisely because second language learning in a school offering an immersion program is so often confined to activities organized by the teacher and occurring in the classroom that planning and creating an effective immersion school culture becomes so important. Because of the nature of immersion schooling, there is a need to create a more natural language learning environment.

In order to create a culture that will foster learning, of both the second language and the subject matter, it is important that school trustees, and district and school administrators reflect on the factors that affect second language acquisition. These factors can be summarized as follows:

1. *Relevance:* Learning French must be perceived as pertinent by the learner. Learning French must be valued by persons who are perceived as important by the learner.

2. *Meaningful communication:* Learning French is most effective when the learner is placed in authentic learning situations, situations approximating real life.

3. *Interest:* Activities in French must be of interest to the learner. They must capture the student's imagination.

4. *Security:* Learning French is most effective in a safe and caring environment where the learner perceives that he or she can take risks without fear of ridicule.

5. *Confidence:* Language learning is most effective when the learner is confident that he or she has the wherewithal to tackle the task at hand and that he or she will be successful.

6. *Interaction:* Learning French is most effective when the learner is given opportunities to interact with persons who are important to him or her.

7. *Exposure*: Hearing and reading the same words and idiomatic expressions in different contexts and situations reinforce and enrich the learning of a language.

8. *Models:* Learning French is most effective when the learner is exposed to good and consistent French language models.

These eight factors are at work every day within the classroom. The degree to which teachers are aware of them and plan their teaching and student activities accordingly greatly determines the level of linguistic and academic achievement reached by their students.

If these factors are true of the classroom, they are also true of the whole school. Indeed what takes place in a school determines much of the implicit curriculum of that school. Announcements over the intercom, school activities, teaching methodology and staff interactions are some of the factors that determine what students learn. Theoretically, it would be possible to infer many of the language learning outcomes in a school offering an immersion program from an analysis of the practices in that school. For instance, in a French immersion school where announcements are made exclusively in English, the immersion students learn that speaking about what goes on in the school is done more effectively in English. If learning activities are teacher-centred and rarely involve interaction in the target language, immersion students learn that learning French is an academic pursuit. Similarly, when French immersion students hear the immersion teachers speaking among themselves in English, they learn that French is not very useful in the world outside the classroom.

Creating an effective immersion school culture will require the bridging of the gap between the informal or implicit curriculum and the formal curriculum from Alberta Education. In order to achieve this goal, trustees and central office and school administrators, in close cooperation with teachers, will need to take a good look at the school environment and use of French in the school. This presentation will examine the school environment, the potential of optional courses, and the integration of technology in the teaching/learning process as they relate to an effective immersion school culture.

The Environment in a School Offering an Immersion Program

What is the difference between an ordinary meal and one that immediately catches your attention and whets your appetite? What is the difference in environment between an ordinary immersion school and one that immediately catches the students' attention and whets their appetite to learn more? What is the difference between a good immersion program and a great program you'll be proud to promote?

These are three questions that fundamentally share a common response; one must pay very close attention to not only the *what* but also to the *how* of what we do. A chef will pay close attention to the variety of ingredients used in a dish and to their presentation. A good chef will not be afraid to use ingredients we may not know or to use familiar ingredients in a very original way. And what about the setting? Restaurants spend impressive amounts of money to design or redesign room settings conducive to an enjoyable eating experience in 1998.

Is the task of an immersion school administrator all that different from that of the chef and restaurateur? Not really. The French immersion administrator will want to establish a school environment that catches the students' interest and nourishes their enthusiasm, and will want to communicate in words and in actions that the French immersion program is an important and valued facet of the school. The French immersion administrator will implement practices and policies that demonstrate, unequivocally, support for his immersion staff as they implement classroom practices that support effective learning of the French language, effective acquisition of the curriculum, and effective understanding and appreciation of the French culture.

What are the unique challenges facing the school administrator of a dual track school? Is such an administrator at a disadvantage when compared to the administrator of an immersion centre? Should the policies and practices of single and dual track schools differ?

Which policies should trustees adopt to ensure that the students entrusted to their district's care are given an education second to none? How can central office personnel provide leadership as well as assistance in issues related to planning, staffing and professional development?

Effective teaching and learning is not just a matter of the classroom but of the whole school. What are those tried and true practices of successful French immersion schools? of school districts where immersion is doing well? What are those little but so important, yet too often overlooked things that can make such a huge difference? How can students, teachers, parents, administrators, guidance personnel, reading clinicians and central office personnel contribute to the creation and maintenance of an effective immersion school culture?

French immersion has been part of the Canadian experience for the past 30 years. Those years have provided an abundant crop of ideas, strategies and practices. This workshop will spotlight some of them.

Communication and Information Technologies

Computer technology has become an integral part of schooling. Teachers and students alike are becoming increasingly literate in the use of computers to accomplish a variety of tasks, to communicate and to access information. Because this technology is dictating much of what goes on in schools, it is having a profound impact on the school culture. The computer revolution is happening so rapidly that one of the new challenges facing education decision-makers is to ensure that the technology will serve the purpose of education. This challenge takes on a new twist in schools offering immersion programs where administrators and teachers have to ask the question: How can communication and information technologies contribute to an effective immersion school culture?

In order to answer this question, a number of related issues must be addressed:

- the availability of appropriate software in the French language,
- offering instruction on computer use and providing assistance in French,
- the identification, evaluation and sharing of French language web sites,
- the use of computers as a learning tool for subjects taught in French,
- the use of computers for distance learning in French,
- the establishment of networks to encourage students to communicate in French with students across the province, across Canada and around the world,
- the use of computers to deliver in-service activities for teachers.

Fine Arts and Physical Education in a School Offering an Immersion Program

Although music, art, drama and physical education are widely viewed as options and are excluded from Alberta Education's achievement and diploma testing programs, they play an invaluable role in the education of all children. Because of their very nature, these optional subjects cater to children's multiple intelligences and are responsive to different learning styles. In fact, the better informed core subject area teachers are borrowing freely from the pedagogy in these optional subject areas. By integrating movement, music, and art in the different subject areas, teachers are better able to respond to individual differences.

In a school offering a French immersion program, music, art, drama and physical education take on an even more important role. If one reflects on the role of the social environment on first language acquisition, it is easier to understand the importance of providing maximum exposure to the French language in a school offering an immersion program. Much of the English language learning in Alberta results from the constant exposure to television, radio, family activities, private lessons, team sports, etc. In French immersion, offering these optional courses in French can compensate somewhat for the powerful English language environment that supports the acquisition of the first language. These subject areas provide contexts that

approximate real life situations, where students can learn French vocabulary, idioms and structures without feeling obliged to concentrate on acquiring the language. Offering these subjects in French provides the exposure so necessary to the development of language spontaneity.

In addition to the cultural dimension, the music program offers many opportunities for students to absorb French vocabulary, idioms and structures almost effortlessly through songs. French folk songs will expose students to vocabulary that may not be included in themes covered in regular subject areas. For instance "les chansons de métiers" describe logging, hunting, farming, fishing, forging, going to the market, etc.

The drama class has the potential of becoming one of the most promising language learning settings. It provides opportunities for students to associate body language and French utterances, thereby making them more meaningful. When words, idioms and entire sentences are supported by facial expressions and actions, they are easier to interpret, recall and use. The drama class provides opportunities for the teacher to work on French pronunciation and intonation without appearing critical of the student's competence in French. Finally, the drama class could very well motivate students to switch to the French language television channels, thereby increasing the overall exposure to the French language

Offering art and physical education in French exposes students to much of the vocabulary that is necessary to talk about the world they live in. In art class, students are required to discuss abstract concepts in the French language. In physical education class, they are given opportunities to use everyday vocabulary and expressions in talking about equipment, facilities, training, sports, etc.

Aline Brault, Consultant, Edmonton Catholic Schools, Edmonton
Marcel Lavallée, Edmonton
Robert Martin, Assistant Principal, École Frère Antoine, Edmonton
Alain Nogue, Assistant Director, Language Services Branch, Alberta Education, Edmonton

SESSION NOTES

A French Immersion School Culture: The Foundation for Success

ALINE BRAULT, MARCEL LAVALLÉE, ROBERT MARTIN, AND ALAIN NOGUE

The following summary was prepared from notes taken during the session by a volunteer recorder, and from any other written records of the session as may have been kept on flip charts or work sheets. The summary was reviewed by the session presenters and printed with their agreement.

Content Overview (Alain Nogue)

(Questions, Answers and Implications)

Q: How is French immersion schooling different from regular schooling?

A: Learning French while using it to negotiate, structure and communicate meaning in other subject areas is a primary focus of the teaching/learning process in an immersion program.

I: Because of its role in determining academic success, French language learning becomes a major priority.

Q: How is learning French in an immersion environment different from learning it in a French speaking community?

A: Forgetting for a moment what the learner learns, the major difference is in the context in which language learning occurs. Whereas family or community activities are natural and for the most part spontaneous with the language learning as a by-product, the school's context is artificially created and maintained for the purpose of learning the target language.

I: In the school environment, the context has to be nurtured and massaged to bring it to approximate a natural context as much as possible.

Q: What do we mean by a school culture?

A: The context in a school that impacts on learning. The context results from the dynamic interplay of the different elements that make up the learning environment. It determines much of the implicit curriculum in the school.

I: Stakeholders need to be aware of the interplay of the different elements that make up their school's culture. They also need to understand their role in creating and maintaining an effective school culture.

Q: What do we mean by an effective immersion school culture?

A: One that supports learning generally and French language learning specifically. One that contributes to the students' motivation to learn French and to learn in French. One that gives credibility to the immersion option.

I: Decision-makers need to realize that, because of the mandate of a school offering immersion, its culture should be different from that of a "regular" school.

Q: What needs to be done to create an effective immersion school culture?

A: It requires a clear understanding of what immersion is and what it is not. It requires a commitment on the part of the decision-makers. This commitment should be reflected in a clearly expressed mission statement for the school and should be evident in the schools' practices. For instance, exposing immersion students to activities specifically designed to create/bolster the immersion school culture should be a matter of policy. The enlightened French immersion administrator has to be able to respond to those who argue in favour of limiting French plays, films, concerts, etc. because such activities exclude the non-immersion students.

I. An effective immersion school culture is everyone's business.

Immersion Culture Through Physical Education and the Arts (Aline Brault)

This presentation specifically dealt with how, at a classroom level, the non-core subjects are fundamental in creating a French immersion culture.

Why is there a need to go beyond the core subjects?

The child's mother tongue is constantly enriched at home by influences such as nursery rhymes, family outings, fishing, camping, television, radio, music lessons, dance lessons, movies, concerts, commercials signs, restaurant menus, and individual and teams sports to name but some.

There is no equivalent contribution to the acquisition of the French language. The schools can imitate the richness of the English environment to some extent by providing as many subjects as possible in French.

Exactly how do the Arts and Physical Education help develop the child's French?

These non-core subjects are invaluable in two ways.

A. They provide a **variety of learning situations** which develop the multiple intelligences and respect different learning styles.

Taking one at a time, it is interesting to note the scope of the learning situations each subject presents.

Music

- While a student is singing she is **using correct and—often very many—more-complex sentence structures, and richer vocabulary** than she would use in conversation.
- Children are very tolerant of **repeating** songs and games over and over, whereas they are unlikely to be repeating a **correct sentence** in conversation more than once.
- Students **utter far more French sentences** while singing than they would in a half-hour period in a classroom.
- **All students can be singing simultaneous** in French, so there is more practice time for the correct and rich vocabulary than in a regular class setting.

Art

- Because the creative process involves a high level of personal meaning, children will often relate to the event or object in French.
- There is a story of a child returning from Québec who recounted her experiences in English to her parents until she fell upon a toy she had made with her friends. Upon pulling the toy from her suitcase, she broke into French, talking to her toy with great emotion.

Drama

- Like music, drama affords the opportunity to express oneself in an excellent quality French. Memorized texts add the element of learning to use expression and proper spoken intonation.

Physical Education

- Attaching movement to language reinforces the learning for many students.
- The emotional element of team sports and personal goal setting can provide a deep sense of accomplishment which, when related to French, helps anchor the value of using the language.

B. These subjects expose students to a greater quantity of areas of language which will be referred to as the different **domains of language**.

Each of the subjects provides an opportunity to develop new areas of vocabulary as well as a technical or professional vocabulary.

Music

French folk music is incredibly rich in vocabulary.

- There are songs about working: logging, fishing, black-smithing, etc
- Students learn to sing descriptions of landscapes, events, and people, all of which expose them to excellent syntax.
- Music is also a direct source of history-related folklore which students often memorize.

Technical vocabulary such as the names of instruments, the elements of music, scores, conducting, expressions, phrasing, etc. are learned in English through private lessons and other contacts such as television and friends. In French they would most likely only be learned in a classroom setting.

Art

Art requires that students learn to express their personal opinion and tastes. The many specific phrases needed to accomplish this become very useful later when, as teenagers, students want to express their ideas and points of view.

The technical language of art depends on the projects and therefore will likely cover a broad spectrum of vocabulary over the years. Art would include discussion of medium, colour, shapes, composition, perspective, technique and representation.

Drama

Depending on the type of experience, students will learn to talk of improvisation rules, and develop a language of negotiation to accomplish putting on a play.

Technically, students learn the vocabulary of costuming, make-up, moods, scripts, and roles.

Physical Education

Drilling and cheering are both very repetitive and require very rich idiomatic expressions.

Learning to state rules and negotiate referee calls also teaches specific sentence structures.

Technically, all the sporting equipment, motions, positions, and plays provide students with the very common vocabulary necessary to carry on an informal conversation in any bilingual setting.

What is the value of learning French?

Students will ultimately want to speak French if it is useful to them. While the core subjects provide vocabulary for a broad range of topics, these only become useful when they are used in expressing a student's ideas, opinions and feelings. Music, Drama, cheering and Art are all opportunities for students to learn the sentence structures that enable them to express themselves at an emotional level.

Who is the greatest proponent of the value of French?

Just as Klein wanted to hear from parents about the cutbacks as opposed to listening to the teachers whom, he claimed, were too partisan, students are often very impressed by the teachers who value and promote French, but who do not teach French Language Arts per se. When the Math teacher or the Physical Education teacher thinks French is "cool" the message is very clear.

What affects our long-term memory the most?

Emotions and relationships! When asked what they remember of their Grade 1 experience most adults relate an emotional anecdote or describe a personal relationship.

We need caring teachers who demonstrate their passion for French and who model a consistent use of it, regardless of the emotional circumstances. Who better than the teachers of the arts and Physical Education, who often have wonderful relationships with their students?

Many of the most precious things in our lives are things that cannot be measured. The creation of an immersion culture is such a thing in that it is immeasurable and achieved outside the core subjects. The French learned in this setting will likely outlive any formal tested knowledge. As an Hungarian once said; "We all studied Russian for years without much motivation, as it was the imposed language of our oppressors. I forgot everything, but for some reasons I still remember the songs."

Information and Communication Technology (Robert Martin)

There are two types of curricula in French immersion schools:

- stated curriculum, Alberta Education
- hidden curriculum

Some factors that affect language acquisition:

- relevance
- confidence
- meaningful communication
- interest
- security
- interaction
- models
- exposure

In order for the student to succeed in such a unique program, the hidden curriculum must:

- demonstrate that the administration is convinced of the value of French immersion
- support teachers in every way possible in terms of resources
- demonstrate the implicit valuing of the language in all areas of the stated curriculum
- provide for cultural activities where the language can be reinforced

Communication and information technology

By using the language acquisition principles previously mentioned, a number of arguments can be made for providing a French technology experience:

Exposure:	hearing and reading relevant material in context and in French reinforces language learning
Meaningful Communication:	French is valued when all of the working tools are in French
Interest:	although English is the predominant language in technology, French is the second language of the Internet it is a vibrant and developed language in the technology world.
Relevance:	learning French must be perceived to be pertinent by the learner
Security and Confidence:	computers contribute to student-differentiated learning learning French is most effective in a safe and caring environment where

risk-taking may be done without fear of ridicule
there is excellent French software that can assist differentiated learning

Interaction: learning French is most effective when a positive relationship is created between the outside world and the students' activities
in this way, interaction is accomplished in a meaningful context

Models: learning French is most effective if the learner is constantly exposed to the language in all domains

Some obstacles:

- perceived lack of available resources
- funding of resources
- English-only technicians
- districts that believe that having some programs in French is sufficient
- dual track schools
- teacher resistance

Bridging the gap:

In summary, to create an effective immersion school culture using technology, the school must:

- integrate French in all areas of learning
- link the stated and hidden curricula
- be convinced and endorse its value
- offer all resources in French
- realize that all obstacles can be overcome

Role of the principal (Marcel Lavallée)

Planning

- Institute a planning process and administrative procedures that are respectful of the needs in each program.
- Purpose of planning is to enhance accountability.
- Leading a dual track school is an excellent opportunity to put into practice the dynamics found in an officially bilingual and culturally diverse country.
- Planning to focus on the educational needs of each group of students.

Role

- Not speaking French is not necessarily a reason for a hands-off approach by principals; principals are not helpless because they do not speak the language, just like they are not helpless in a senior high school with many specialties, just like they are not helpless in a school that may have programs for special needs students; a hands-off approach is not so much a result of a lack of training or expertise in a specialized area as it is a manifestation of his or her personal attitude towards a program.
- Provide facilitative leadership, formative evaluation of staff.
- Ensure that clear goals have been developed consensually by all representative groups.
- Encourage professional development: support attendance at conferences, subscriptions to *Vie Pédagogique*, membership in *Conseil Français*, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, Canadian Modern Language Review.
- Visit the classroom, observe the students, talk to them, find out what they can and cannot do, discuss their achievement and progress with the teacher.

School Councils

- Provide opportunities for all parents to have significant input and involvement in the realization of the objectives of each program.
- Identify what they would like to see achieved in each program.

Conditions for success

- Strong leadership by the principal and the school council.
- Recognition that there are common needs for all students and other needs specific to each program.
- Program-specific needs are identified and solutions found by parents and staff involved in the specific program; common needs are addressed by everyone.
- Recognition that each program is different, and that different activities, different measures are required to address program needs. When the specific needs and program goals are well identified and articulated, it becomes much easier to explain variances in approaches and decisions. What is good for one program might not necessarily be so for the other program.

- Important for all parents to feel that the objectives for the program their child attends are being fully met.
- School council would have representation from both programs.
- Good communication is a more valuable practice in most situations than formal policies, rules or meetings.

External

- Visible presence of the two programs when you enter the school.
- Attractive features of both programs, and details about each program are featured in the school's handbook and publicity.
- General feeling of respect for differences.
- Open communication about programs, and general understanding and acceptance of each program's needs and activities.
- Sharing of resources between programs (some resources could enrich the FSL [core French] program in a school; cross-program teaching especially at the secondary level).
- Communications could be made first in French, then in English.
- Both languages are commonly heard in the environment.
- French staff are free and welcome to speak French, with French speakers switching to English when necessary.

Building a shared school culture in dual track schools (70%)

- Establishing a shared school culture does not imply that schools should embrace a single culture or give up the identities of their individual programs; it implies that common goals, norms, beliefs and practices might arise amongst all the myriad sub-groups that exist in a dual track school. This result further develops positive relationships and better learning in these schools. and brings the French and English program participants together.

Climate factors

- Many factors are common to good schools: mutual respect, good interpersonal relationships, strong administration and staff, good communication, high expectations.
- Equality of programs and practices. Equity and excellence go hand in hand.
- Focus on nurturing the parts and having the parts become whole.
- Strong parental involvement.
- Leadership that deals well with the diversity. Need specific plans to deal with diversity. Harmonious relations, integration of programs and people will not occur spontaneously simply as a result of good intentions and good will.
- Institute practices that demonstrate equality of treatment and fairness.
- Tolerance for diversity, viewing subculture formation as natural as long as it is developed within the overall norms and goals of the school.

Practices

- Having students from all programs together in certain option courses (7 to 12).
- Communicate to the parents on a regular basis that the program is doing well.
- Believe that difficulties can be overcome. Collective confidence and belief in program is necessary.

Leadership at the district level

- Guidance and leadership must be provided at the district level to ensure team effort and a sense of purpose; otherwise, individual teachers' efforts are overwhelmed by a pervasive sense of isolation and aimlessness.
- Design workshops to help non-French speaking principals with how to evaluate their French immersion teachers; point out that there are many commonalities—good teaching is good teaching; linguistic expertise should be dealt with at the interview.
- Evaluation should look at not only process, what the teacher does, but also at the students' learning progress and achievements.
- Teachers should have a personal plan to maintain and enhance their proficiency as French language speakers and writers.
- Providing a complement of support services : special education and remedial programs.
- French curriculum leadership.
- Although most boards have few or no bilingual administrative staff, they act as if it were business as usual.
    - How does the school as an organization react and adapt to the introduction of French immersion?
        - Staffing and professional development
        - Program promotion
- Clear information regarding the intents of the board in program implementation.
- Policies and practices to monitor and improve the district's or school's immersion program.
- Administrative belief in the program
    - What are the policies re: admission to the program, transfers, staffing, provincial and federal funding, students with special needs, field trips, cultural exchanges?
    - How are board policies affecting the nature of the program, accessibility to it?

Threats

- That the immersion programs, once established, lose their strength of innovation, of enthusiasm,; need visionary educators, administrators and parents.

A lot of research in immersion has focussed on the cognitive aspects. The other areas have received little attention.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

Building the Future: The Role of the School Administrator

WAYNE HAMPTON

I'd like to thank the conference organizers for the opportunity to share with you this afternoon.

I don't think I have anything very earth shattering to share. I'm sure many of the things I'm going to say you will have heard. What I'd like to do in my ten minute time is to begin with an overview of the demographics of our French immersion program in Lacombe, because it is a small rural program. Then, I would like to talk about: my belief system in terms of my role as an administrator of a dual track school; some best practices that have worked for us; and some issues and challenges that have arisen with the French immersion program, and how we have dealt with them.

The French immersion program in Lacombe is in its fourteenth year of operation. We had our first Grade 12 graduates last year. There were nine students in the graduating class and approximately 235 students in our K to 12 French immersion program.

Our school structure in the town of Lacombe is probably the most bizarre in the whole world, and I think it is important that you have an appreciation of that. But it does work very well in spite of sounding somewhat bizarre.

We have a Kindergarten to Grade 2 dual track school with 463 students. Of these, 82 are in French immersion. In a second building, my building, we have grades 3 to 6 with 400 students, 83 in French immersion. Then, in the junior high building we have 535 students—and since we have experienced the same trend as many other French immersion programs throughout Alberta and across the country—about 35 of those students are enrolled in French immersion. So, you can appreciate how, in a school of 535, the immersion program is small in terms of the number of students, but it is very important in our hearts, and we are committed to it. In high school there are approximately 750 students, with about 30 in French immersion. I am sure you can see some challenges there at the secondary level. In my building, we have split four–five and five–six classes, and of course there are split classes in the junior and senior high as well.

I've been intimately involved with the French immersion program the past nine years as an administrator and the past seven years as a parent.

To explain my belief system. The beliefs I'm going to share with you this afternoon are fundamental and apply whether you have a single track English or single track French school, or a dual track school. Many of the ideas and best practices I will share dovetail very nicely with the session yesterday on creating a school culture for French immersion programming. I think it is really important for us as administrators—and please understand I have absolutely no fluency in the language, except my high school French. My daughters in grades 6 and 4 make a great deal of fun of me and we have a great time at supper, when I start to speak French. If you want your children to start speaking French simply say, "You know you could be saying a lot about Mom and Dad

right now, and we wouldn't even understand:" that really gets them rolling. We have lots of fun with that, and when I try to use my French, too, it is pretty brutalizing to the language, let me tell you. But I believe that as administrators it is not enough to simply tolerate a program. I think we have to be intimately involved in it. We can't let the teachers fend for themselves. This is probably true in English or French, whether it is French immersion, special needs resource, or whatever. But probably because some of us don't have a fluency in the language, there might be a tendency to say, "Well, we'll hope that the teachers can make it fly." I don't think that is sufficient. As an administrator, I believe we have to be actively engaged in all aspects of the program to ensure that the program, the students, and the school fair well. Even if we don't have fluency in the language, we need to be intimately involved in the day-to-day and long-term planning and operation of the program. As administrators, we must guide and be directly involved in all the aspects of the program. Passivity is just not good enough.

We also need to be sensitive at all times to the complex political realities and implications of French immersion. Especially if you come from central Alberta—I know it is not unique to central Alberta, but probably true for many communities across our province—being sensitive to those political realities is very important. If we are not, it may easily lead to conflict in both the internal and the external school environment. We need to be seen as actively supporting all programs: English, French immersion, etc, etc. We need to be supporting the programming, the planning and the activities that go with it. The bottom line is that we need to be seen as very proactive with all programs.

A good example: seven years ago our numbers were falling a bit and in my school we had 16 students in the Grade 6 French immersion class but we had six English classes, one of them with 34 students. You know what happens when situations like that arise. We had to move towards split grades. It is very important that staffing be seen as fair and equitable across the board. We had discussions with parents and we demonstrated to them how split classes could be very successful. We went with split classes the following year, and they have, indeed, been very successful.

We need to be open and accountable. There is a perception that French immersion programs and students get substantially more funding than all the other programs. I dealt with that often seven or eight years ago. I don't deal with it anymore, because I think with the move towards site-based decision-making parents see exactly what the funding is. Yes, in our situation we get $91 per student for French immersion, so it is an extra $7,000 for our budget. But it is not a significant amount. Parents need to see and understand that. I had a parent recently speak to me about funding and she was really embarrassed when she found out my own children were in French immersion. I said, "That is no problem. I'm glad that you asked and I'm glad that you brought it forth." So being open and accountable is really critical.

Also, when we do activities in our school for the French immersion program that we are very proud of, we go out of our way to try to include the English program students and staff. For example, we include the English students in cultural activities such as our *Cabane á sucre*, or any cultural performances that we feel that the English students will be able to get the gist of, and enjoy. If the activity involves a lot of language, which many of them do, it's not fair to include the English students because they won't understand what is going on, and will just become restless.

In the last few months we had an issue to deal with, and we dealt with it as we do in all instances in our school: as a team. In September, each of our two split classes had an enrolment of 28 students. We met as a French immersion team, discussed it, and decided to just leave it and see what unfolded. We got a couple more students and it pushed both classes to 29. We sat down and discussed it once again. We were very fortunate to be able to do this; we were in a position to hire a .2 full time equivalent French immersion teacher, who now comes in one hour a day to teach the Grade 5 students. This extra help gives the grades 4 and 6 teachers one hour each day to be alone with the grades 4 and 6 students. We felt that was the best solution in view of the circumstances. I think it is really going to help everybody: staff and students. Parents were also very, very pleased that we were proactive. We do the same thing in the English program, if we find that there is a situation arising where we need to address staffing: we work as a team.

In our school, we have dual signage throughout. When you walk into our school you will see "welcome" in both French and English. You'll see our mission statement in a very large frame in French and English. Our team and care models are displayed in French and English. Every room in the school—computer room, library, etc.—has both French and English mission statements on display. I think this dual signage sends a really important message. I never have to deal with complaints, if you can call them complaints, from English parents saying, "What is this nonsense about having to have French language on the signs?" I think it is actually appreciated, now that we have done it. The only place in the school we don't have dual signage is on the front of the building, which believe me, is a really big political issue. I tried to get dual signage on the front last year but it didn't work out. Another thing that we do at least once per week is to play "Oh Canada" in French, on the basis that French immersion makes up 20% of the school.

We do not counsel students out of the program. Now, let me just expand on that a touch. We have, on occasion, counselled some students out. As recently as three weeks ago, we had a student tested. This is a frustration I sometimes feel when, if your central office doesn't have a person who is experienced with immersion, which is our case—I'm not criticizing, that is just a reality—there tends to be a knee-jerk reaction to move the child into the English program. In my mind, and I think that the research supports me, that is the wrong thing to do. You also create a certain degree of animosity in the English program and hear comments such as, "They can't succeed in the French program, so let's dump them into the English program." With the student we had tested recently, we sat down with the parents and teacher, and set out a plan about how we were going to address this student's needs right in the French immersion program. The only time we don't make an effort to avoid having the child leave the program is when a parent comes in and says, "I want to take my child out of the program." I will always ask them what their reason is and if there a problem, but sometimes parents just don't feel comfortable. We have had that happen on occasion, but not often. Our attrition from Kindergarten to Grade 7 is largely caused by families moving away. In our mobile society, families are moving away and we don't gain as many children in French immersion as in the English program. For the most part, our attrition in our programs is not caused by "dropouts," although there may be a few more in junior or senior high.

Something else that is highly valued and very important, which I've alluded to earlier, is the teaming. We have umpteen teams throughout our school: grade level teams, program teams, French immersion teams. I believe that the strength of a team comes from its diversity; the success of a team comes from its ability to work together.

We need to maximize the involvement and inclusion of all stakeholder groups whenever and wherever possible: staff, parents and even students. At Lacombe Upper Elementary, our teams are very abundant—technology team, budget team, physical education program teams, on and on and on. Because of my lack of fluency in the French language, in our school one of the French immersion teachers acts as a liaison, and communicates a lot of information to the French immersion team of three teachers and one French speaking teacher assistant. We have French immersion program meetings, which I chair, and they are in English. I think it is very important that that type of support be demonstrated. We have an ongoing dialogue; we schedule formal meetings throughout the year, but we do have an ongoing dialogue. Also, because of the fragmentation of our program in the town of Lacombe, we have a K to12 French immersion team that meets monthly or bi-monthly. Normally all the teachers attend, and as many of the administrators as possible. I try to attend them all. The purpose of those meetings is to create a dialogue: talk about how things are going, plan in-services, and plan our cultural activities (particularly *Cabane á sucre*).

Supporting and working with the Canadian Parents for French local chapter is also critical. CPF is a wonderful vehicle for program promotion. I really believe that potential French immersion parents need to hear it from parents who have experience with the program. They don't want to hear it from educators, because the teacher does not know the parent's perspective. Even mine, although I am an immersion parent, is not the perspective they need. They want to hear from a non-educator who has placed their child in the program.

Our CPF chapter has had an interesting history. It was originally created when the program started 14 years ago. It was a very powerful group—the lead group and wonderful parents. However, they just couldn't agree on things, so the chapter folded. We revived it last year because the parents expressed an interest in it. Our motto is "we are going to go slow to go fast." I think it is going to work wonderfully.

I think the most powerful thing CPF did last year was to have the chapter President attend the ECS parent information meeting in May. She talked about the French immersion program, and what it is like to have a child, or two children, in French immersion. As a result, we had ten students move from English ECS into French immersion Grade 1. Now, that does create some problems, because there is no doubt their level of French is going to be lower than the level of the children who experienced the French immersion ECS program. Parents were anxious, too. I had many parents express concerns about having made the right choice. We all have self-doubts. We need to do as good a job as possible of communicating that, in time, the child will do wonderfully.

Another thing that we've done has been to take advantage of the French monitor program. We had a French monitor for three years. We weren't approved for one this year, but we hope to be again in the future. The French monitor is wonderful for bringing additional French cultural experiences to the students. We also used that person in the English programs to try to instil a better understanding and knowledge of the French culture.

Resource room assistance is another issue that comes up with small programs, particularly because we don't have the money to hire resource teachers. Our program at one time had a .5 FTE resource teacher, then it was reduced to .3. When we went to site-based decision-making, we sat down, talked about it, and to decided to delete the position. Instead we hired a full time French speaking assistant, which has been a true success story. I mean that so sincerely. We use that

person to work with every single Grade 3 and Grade 4 student on a weekly basis. She takes every child for about 15 minutes to work on their French Language Arts reading. In grades 5 and 6 her focus still tends to be on French Language Arts, but if a student is having difficulties in Math, she'll work on that. As an administrator, I get really upset when we have teachers' aides doing bulletin board displays and things like that. I believe we should maximize the time with the students.

We also implemented a home reading program, which is a must for Grade 3s, Grade 4s and some of the Grade 5s. As part of the Teacher Assistant Program, the Teacher Assistant assigns students a certain reading to practice four times over the course of the next week, before she sees them again. It is wonderful! Our daughter gets out the books and reads to us. Of course, I never try and correct her, because I don't have any fluency. I don't want to get her going in the wrong direction. But she is reading French very, very successfully.

I believe that the enhancement of French immersion in Alberta lies with our ability to create a strong network of all the stakeholders involved. If we can work together as a team, communicate and share ideas and frustrations, I think we will be very successful. Our program is a real success, but there certainly are some challenges. And attrition is probably the biggest one right now.

Thank you.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

Building the Future: The Role of the School Administrator

Emilie Keane

Thank you all for the opportunity of addressing you this afternoon and of sharing with you the way St. Albert provides programs for our French immersion students.

Our program is approaching its twentieth anniversary in the spring and we were looking forward to that celebration. I'm in a grades 7 through 12 school. We will be graduating our eighth class in the spring and we are very excited about that. I'm going to speak about the St. Albert Catholic experience rather than the experience of Greater St. Albert, our district after amalgamation, because the two experiences are different.

In St. Albert Catholic, French immersion classes were organized within French immersion centres, or single track schools. We have two elementary K to 6 schools and one junior/senior high, 7 to 12 school in our district in St. Albert. Mine is the junior/senior high school, Sainte Marguerite d'Youville. Twenty-five percent of our division's total student population is enrolled in French immersion in St. Albert Catholic, and we are very proud of that. But it hasn't come without a lot of hard work, and some creativity and innovation on the part of our schools and our division.

When French immersion programs were initiated some twenty years ago, the federal political climate promoted being bilingual in terms of opportunities for employment and advantages it would give students. More recently, we have seen a change in that political movement, and certainly a decrease in federal funding and the political importance given to bilingualism. So promotion has become something that we have worked on ourselves.

We have worked hard at promoting our programs with the message that being bilingual is an important advantage for students. We started at the elementary level, encouraging as many students as possible to begin French immersion at Kindergarten or Grade 1. We educated parents about the long-range possibilities of French immersion. Being able to see an entire program from K to12 available within a community gave parents in our district a sense of confidence in its future. And, at Kindergarten registration evenings, some graduates from our high school, and even some of junior high students, have been invited to address parents on the advantages they have been given by staying in the French immersion program.

Our goal is to encourage students to stay in the program all the way through, once they register for Kindergarten. We know that doesn't always happen, but it has certainly been our experience in St. Albert Catholic that they stay to Grade 10. Our attrition rate at Grade 7 is almost non-existent. We keep almost 100% of our students. When we lose them is Grade 10, because then they leave for social reasons, thinking the grass is greener on the other side: "A big high school will surely provide me with greater opportunities for program choice, more friends, better athletic opportunities...." and a variety of other, similar reasons. Interestingly enough, in the last month I've had three of those students come to me and say, "Can I come back? I don't like the big school." There are some advantages to small schools. We generally keep 50% to 65% of our junior high students for high school.

We promote our grades 7 to 12 program on just that basis: the small school advantage. We have only 436 students in those grades, so we promote the facts that they have more teacher attention and that we have a strong academic program. We look at the things that we can provide. We work hard to be competitive in all aspects.

Technology is a big thing today and in some of the big schools technology is, of course, given a very high priority, so if we don't give it equal priority in our schools certainly we lose our students. So we've become creative. Last year we implemented a dual platform technology system within our school. We run both Macintosh and IBM— two separate labs all networked. That was quite a challenge.

Because our school is a French immersion centre, one focus of our program has been the opportunities for students to develop oral language. We expect that when you come to our school, when you come to the front office, when you come to the library, and when you address a teacher in the halls and the classrooms, you will use French. Most of our staff are Francophones. We hope that through this focus on using French, our students will develop a higher level of competency in French.

One good practice you may want to look at is formally assessing oral French. We've had various competitions where students participate in oratorical contests. We took away the contest part and for every reporting period students must give their teacher a tape of their oratorical skills. They can choose any topic they want. We use tapes instead of speaking in front of a group because we want to take away any shyness or nervousness. We want our students to strut their stuff so to speak. The students, with their Language Arts teachers, have devised a rubric for evaluation, so they know exactly what they are being assessed on. They know what kind of content is being graded, how we mark diction, pronunciation, masculine and feminine accord, and they know what to include in their presentation. We also do fun things like having them present their favourite sport or their favourite recipes in class demonstrations. These presentations have been very popular with the students—anything that helps them to speak.

In our school, because we are single track, it has been easier for us to promote the philosophy of French immersion—to have a unique mission statement that our staff and our parents follow. We have spent a great deal of time and effort to educate our parents about French immersion. At our orientation evenings we take the opportunities with a crowd of parents there to talk about how students learn in French immersion, so that the myths and their fears about immersion education can be removed. We tell them, for example, that learning a science concept—because, of course, Science and Math are the areas at the secondary level where the parents are often most leery—is the same in French and English. The language of instruction doesn't matter. We help parents to realize that students leave our program after Grade 12 with the same knowledge base as an English program student and that they can go on to an English or a French university program with the advantage of having the bilingual opportunities available to them. We bring back our graduates from universities, NAIT or SAIT, Grant MacEwan College and other programs to talk to our parents and to our students about their experiences. We ask them to be honest. They are, and usually in a positive way.

We put aside a healthy budget for promotion, and we advertise in the papers, send letters home to parents, etc. Sharing information is vital. People don't want to be a part of something that they are not fully aware of, or informed about.

In Grade 9, one of the things that we've tried to do to increase the number of students who stay for high school in Grade 10 has been meeting with individual students in Grade 9 to help them plan their programs. We are very direct with students who could be good students at the high school level in French immersion, who could be strong academic students: "You should really consider staying here. This is a good program for you. You would do well here." We tell them that because sometimes if they don't hear it, they don't think about it. Then, if a friend decides to go to another school, off they go. So we tell them that they should be staying. The other thing that we do is to look for those student leaders who, if they stayed, would entice other students to stay. We do active promotion and, I'm not ashamed to say, it does work. We have kept more of our students. We've also surveyed our students, to find out what kinds of things they want in high school, and what it is we don't have that they would like to see. Most often, the only thing that we can't give them is a larger student body.

We run a full French immersion high school program. Our high school population is about 128 students, or five classes. We teach only English Language Arts in English. All of our sciences and maths are taught in French. Because we want to be able to offer a spectrum of courses to both those students who are a little less academic and those who are more academic, we've had to put our creative juices to work. We hired a part-time teacher (.25 FTE) whose job it is to offer distance learning programs to students. That teacher's role is to monitor and follow their progress, to make sure that students who begin a correspondence program follow through and finish it. As well, she offers instructional assistance to students. So in classes or in grades where we don't have enough students to offer a Math 23 course but we have students who could use that, we do it through our distance learning program. For some of our gifted students it offers some flexibility, too. We have students who are taking psychology and a variety of marketing and economic courses that they are enjoying and would not have access to in most schools.

I was asked specifically to address what we do in our school for learning resources for those students who have learning difficulties. We do have a variety of students with learning problems. Because we have been keeping 100% of our students right from elementary, we have a broad spectrum of students. We have a student this year in Grade 12 who has autism. He is going to graduate in the top three percent of his class. We have another student in Grade 11 who has obsessive-compulsive behaviour and organizational and fine-motor problems to the point where he must use the computer because you can't read his handwriting. We have another student in junior high with Tourette syndrome. Those are the more severe cases. We have varying degrees of problems, from students who have temporary learning problems because they've missed one concept in math to those with long-term problems in reading comprehension, or math, or the like.

So, again, we have a part-time teacher (.25 FTE) to coordinate the individual program plans (IPPs) for these students, to work with classroom teachers to develop the IPPs, and then to provide a variety of strategies for both the students and the teachers. We have grade level meetings on a regular basis. At these team meetings we look at the students who are having problems and develop different strategies that we can try as a team. Our students move from teacher to teacher for each of their courses because we hire subject specialists, so it is not unusual for a student in

Grade 7 to have seven or eight teachers. If, as a team, we can approach their educational programs with a consensus and with similar teaching strategies, we're more likely to be successful.

The other thing that we do is meet with the students and their parents, and try to teach them metacognitive approaches. Students, I believe, need to know that they have learning problems in some areas and they need to know how to address them directly. You can't hide the difficulties under the carpet; if you do, you are not going to be successful in addressing them. If students can't address their difficulties themselves, they're going to have problems later in life, especially those students who have confirmed learning disabilities. We have a teacher aide as well, who works with that team.

We've become more adept at identifying the needs of students, but sometimes we do ask or recommend that a student leave our program. Occasionally we have tested a student and found that their lack of success in the program is due, in fact, to a language disability. It is very difficult, in a secondary program, if a student has a language disability to offer the level of remediation that would be necessary to make them successful. In addition, I think that when students through junior high/senior high are having learning difficulties, their personal level of stress, their self-esteem, is more fragile because they are teens and going through hormonal changes. I think that we have to be very conscientious about the decision we help them make. Sometimes the recommendation to go to a program where there is only one language reduces the student's stress so that they can be successful. In the end, every decision we make for a child's program has to help them be successful. It has to help them stay intact as a person; this is very important.

We also provide a program for gifted students. We've done the regular identification through intelligence testing. The teacher responsible for the IPPs is also responsible for what we call the EPPs or Enrichment Program Plans. She also maintains a system where she provides resources and possible activities for teachers in the classrooms, so that they can coordinate their subject area and content with some possible resources and approach for the students. So we meet the needs of our gifted students as much as possible within the classroom, with opportunities for them to come together occasionally for special activities.

We also use a lot of assessment tools. Assessment has been a focus of our school division for the last few years, and we have become very cognizant of the fact that our French immersion students do well on Provincial Achievement Tests and on Diploma Exams—higher than the provincial level. We do brag and boast to our parents, but it is more important that they understand why these students do better. Because in explaining to them how language learning complements anything that they may be learning in terms of content, how it makes them better learners overall, we can give parents and students more confidence in the program, so that the students will stay, we hope, until the end of Grade 12.

One of the other things that we do in our school that has helped us in terms of program choice—because, as I said before, we are a small school and students want a lot of program choice—is to schedule several option courses all within a schedule block, so that students have a variety of courses that they can choose from within that period. Block scheduling enables students to have more choice and has worked well for us too. In addition, our French Language Arts teachers have initiated a program called "auto-correction," which means the students are self-correcting; we do it in English as well but more so in French because it is their second language.

The focus of auto-correction has been to help students improve their writing skills. Sometimes they don't take the time to review what they know about grammar, what they know about syntax, etc; they make careless mistakes. Auto-correction done on a regular basis helps them to be good writers more consistently.

One of the issues that I would like to mention is the fact that sometimes we have a difficulty at the secondary level finding specialized staff. Faculté is doing a good job educating teachers. But we may not have enough students going to Faculté, especially for the secondary level, to supply our needs for specialized teaching staff. Having the right staff is the key to having a successful program, but it is sometimes difficult to get them, and I would assume that it is much more difficult for outlying areas. In St. Albert, we probably have more ready access to young teachers than you would have in other places.

Thank you.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

Building the Future: The Role of the School Administrator

Donna Waraksa

Good Afternoon.

Do you know how difficult it is to follow two people who are so excited about their schools and not to be able to talk about yours? I have been asked to talk about something other than my school: our system-wide French immersion principals group.

I'd like to begin with a bit of history about this group of principals in Calgary. In the early '70s, when the French immersion program began in the Calgary Public system, the supervisor of second languages was Dan Davies. The first principal of the first French immersion school, which was housed in the McDougall Centre downtown, was Budge Burrows; Budge retired two years ago. I imagine that the early meetings were probably pretty informal: Dan and Budge sitting there talking about the issues of French immersion in Calgary. But before long the program grew, and grew, and grew. Soon there were many schools offering the program and more central office support; at one time, we had a team of about five people and a secretary.

Then the principals of all the schools offering the program began meeting. These meetings helped to respond to the special issues and needs of these principals as they supervised their French immersion programs. Some of them were French speaking and some of them weren't, so the meetings were always held in English. The meetings were called and run by the second languages team at that time.

Now I am going to show you some contrasts between how this group worked thirty years ago and how it works today. I interviewed a friend who was one of the early consultants. Her name is Elizabeth Bourges and she is still a teacher in Andrew Davison Elementary School in Calgary. She identified some of the issues that would have hit the agenda at the principals' meetings: registrations with overnight line ups and enrolments accepted on a first-come, first-served basis; busing costs; and opening of new centres.

I found it interesting because it was the opposite of the situation with which we are faced today: attrition. There were people just bounding forth and coming into these programs. What would we do with all these students? We were spending time then identifying schools with space available for these programs. We were also meeting with school communities and promoting the program. That part hasn't changed.

Budget was a big thing then as it is now, but instead of a lack, there was lots of money to spend; the discussion was how to spend it. Selecting and distributing resources, providing professional development for teachers, and knowing when to lend assistance to teachers were some other issues of the day. There was a lot of need for personal assistance to teachers who had come from Quebec and didn't speak a word of English: helping them through the cultural shock, sometimes helping them find housing, encouraging them to network with the other teachers, and familiarizing them with the Alberta curriculum expectations. Just finding French speaking teachers

was a huge issue then. I can remember, even at the time that I was a consultant, the supervisor would fly to Quebec to interview and hire teachers.

Another issue was accountability. I think that will always be on the agenda. The supervisor at the time made many presentations to the board of trustees and senior administration, explaining and reporting on the program. I can remember we used to do immersion weekends for French administrators out at Rafter Six Ranch, and other places where the team would go and help administrators to learn some French and just feel connected to their program. The program wasn't really seen as a regular program at the time. It was seen as an extra, a special program, like GATE (Gifted and Talented Education), maybe even a competing program. Now French immersion is a regular part of the system.

Also on the agenda of the principals' group of that time would have been the promotion of French immersion programs, the importance of second language learning, and ways of working with and responding to the needs of the parents—who were taking big risks themselves by putting their children in a program that hadn't been tried.

How does the agenda look today, all these years later? We still have the principals' group but we've changed our name to French Leadership Group to be more inclusive because sometimes it's the principal who comes, sometimes it's the assistant principal or vice principal or someone on staff who represents that school at the meeting. We also have a Francophone school in our system, so the principal of that school comes as well. We have our one remaining central office specialist attending our meetings. We also have attending one person who is responsible for the selection and evaluation of system resources for French. We have an open invitation to our staffing person from central office who assists with staffing French immersion programs. And we always have invited guests for special topics. These guests might include Alberta Education staff, senior administrators, the chairperson organizing *Le Conseil Français*'s conference, and so on.

Our meetings continue to be held on a monthly basis, but a sign of the times is that the Second Languages Team no longer provides lunch for us. We each dig into our pockets for the forty dollars, for the year, to pay for our lunches, and also to do some supportive things, like buying gifts for the members of our group.

What else is different? No longer is this group run by the Second Languages Team. Each year, we choose from among ourselves two or three people who will coordinate or chair the group. They share the role; they set the agenda, and send a draft by e-mail to everybody in the group so we can see whether we want items to be added. They invite agenda topics, facilitate the meeting, invite guests that pertain to the topics on the agenda, take the minutes and distribute the minutes. At times, depending on the issues, we set up *ad hoc* sub-committees to study an issue, perhaps write letters, and so on. Last year, for instance, we set up a sub-committee to draft a vision, mission, and purpose statement for our group. I didn't bring a copy of that so if anyone is interested you can ask me for that.

Sometimes we write letters. One we are writing right now is in response to a very negative article in a local newspaper. We also send a representative of our group to the French immersion liaison group set up by Canadian Parents for French in our city. It includes a senior administrator, a

trustee, two or three teachers, and a couple of principals. This group also discusses some of the same issues as our group.

Our French Leadership Group meets in a senior high school, so we don't have to pay for a meeting room. We start the meeting over lunch. We eat and chat, and then we start the business portion right at one o'clock, so that we have finished by the end of the day. The system is supporting us, as this is done on Board time. There aren't any costs involved, apart from that forty dollars that we dig out from our own pockets. So, if you want to do something like this in your district, there aren't a lot of costs.

Today, many of our issues are the same, many are not. Budget now is about how best we can spend our dwindling dollars, how we can obtain our resources, and what resources there are. The politics—we talk a lot about how much senior administration support we have. We talk about promoting our programs through staffing, and the preparation of future administrators for our schools. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find administrators who are French speaking and who are supportive of the programs; we are working hard on that. We compare our enrolments, and discuss trends like declining enrolments and attrition. We share information about *Le Conseil Français* and the monitor program. This fall we celebrated our 25th year of French immersion programs in Calgary. For all of us, this group means taking a lot of information back to our schools. We sometimes share professional development opportunities for teachers, articles, books, and papers, as well as information from conferences like this one.

In conclusion, I'd just like to say that this is a networking group that's supportive and collaborative, and we're trying at the same time to be very proactive.

Thank you.

Creating English-French Immersion Harmony in Dual Track Schools
Canadian Rockies District Task Force

ANITA WURST
SCHOOL COUNCIL CHAIR, LAWRENCE GRASSI MIDDLE SCHOOL (CANMORE), CANADIAN ROCKIES SD

DR. BILL BROWNLEE
DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, CANADIAN ROCKIES SD

The following is an edited transcript of the presentation(s) and includes relevant overheads and handouts where available. This material has been reviewed and approved by presenter(s) for publication.

[ANITA WURST]

I'd like to say how proud I am of the work this committee did in response to trying to address the many issues that arise from having a dual track school.

The division was very brave and pro-active to invite the stakeholders to become involved in this committee. The committee was composed of parents, staff and administration from both programs in hopes of educating one another on the needs and challenges facing each program. There were some myths and misunderstandings by both and a great need for all to realize how much one program impacts the other. There needed to be an understanding that although we offered two distinct programs our resources need to be shared equally for the benefit of our children.

[DR. BILL BROWNLEE]

We began our task force work by identifying the issues and our approach.

Equity of opportunity was of major concern to the committee as French immersion was seen to be getting special attention, giving those students an apparent advantage over the English program students. Specific issues were class sizes, field trips and other extra-curricular activities.

1. Identify issues
    1. Equity of opportunity:
        a. class sizes
        b. field trips
    2. Funding
    3. Special needs students
    4. Elitism
    5. Transfers and attrition
    6. Classroom location
    7. Myths and realities
    8. Communication

We examined the statistics and, while French immersion generally had smaller classes in the early years, recent class sizes were quite comparable. With regards to field trips, we sought the advice of a Calgary French immersion school and found that their extra-curricular activities were not put on by the program.

Funding. The issue here was a perception by English program parents that French immersion was receiving additional funding. While this was the case during the start up of the program to provide French language resources, at present these funds are placed in the instructional budget and are not isolated for French immersion in particular. Canadian Parents for French has

provided funds for additional French resources for both French immersion and the French as a second language program.

Special needs students. The concern with special needs students was the speed with which students were seen to be transferred to the English class, when problems were experienced. While there was no assistance provided for learning assistance in the early years of French immersion, recent resource personnel have introduced new guidelines and procedures. However, parents still need information and support.

Elitism. A teacher was accused of having told a parent the "smart students" enrolled in French immersion. When we investigated, it turned out that it wasn't the teacher, but perhaps a parent of one of the French immersion students, who made the comment. It was very difficult for us to address or deal with it, but it certainly made the rounds of the community with some effect.

Transfers and attrition were another problem. Enrolment in French immersion classes tended to drop off, as cohorts moved up through the grades. The Grade 9 class and the high school program were down to one group of students, so we weren't able to offer a full French immersion program. At that particular time, we could only offer two subjects in the high school program in French; the rest were taken in English. Many students were dropping out, and there is a certain amount of truth to that. They dropped out as they got older. The feeling seemed to be that they wanted to take their high school courses in English, because they felt that the instruction would not be there for chemistry, physics and so on. They preferred to enter the English program at that particular time.

The location of the classroom seems a small but important issue. In at least one of the schools, the French immersion classes were separated completely from the English classes. They were in different wings. There was no intermingling of the classrooms. That was seen as a problem. However, in that particular case the parents originally decided and were part of the decision to set the school up that way. Yet it was still seen as a problem.

Myths versus realities was another area that we had to address. There were a great many myths out there about what went on, how classes were conducted. What was the reality of the situation?

Finally, communication was an important issue. We heard many times that parents weren't fully informed of all the things that went on, that there wasn't enough contact.

Those were the concerns that we had to deal with and address through this committee. We undertook them one at a time. In all, we had eight meetings of this committee. We addressed each concern and obtain general agreement on whether or not it was a real issue. When we had addressed each of the issues, we decided what we would recommend to the board.

However, before we get into the recommendations, I want to mention that we identified, as we went along, a number of other issues. For one thing, FSL (core French) offerings within the three schools was an interesting phenomenon. There was certainly a feeling that FSL programs were not offering a viable program, a viable alternative to French immersion.

We offer French from Grade 1 through high school, but the time allotted is limited. For instance, we have three half-hours a week for FSL. The FSL teachers and the English parents

felt that this was not adequate. So it seemed to us that we also needed to be doing something with the FSL program.

1. FSL program
    a. Limitations of programs
    b. Timetable problems
    c. Focus
    d. Financial implications
    e. Entry points
    f. Need for specialists
2. Possibility of separate French immersion school
3. Desire for other languages
4. Reactions to French by a portion of the public

We started by looking at the limitations of the program, for example, what timetable problems arose. What we found was that FSL classes were being used as preparation time for the English teachers. It worked out very well that during those three half-hour periods, the French instructor would go in to relieve the English teacher, who would then have their prep time.

We also found that the time allotment required in different subjects in Alberta, as many of you know, are variable. For instance, if you have language arts, there's a range of items you can offer, but you must offer a minimum. Much of the extra time in a total timetable day, then, is taken up by things like extended time in language arts, math or some of the other core subjects. Increasing the time for FSL, then, was a tough problem to address. The response of the central administration: increasing the time for core French would require additional staff and, therefore, a larger budget. Our position as a committee was that, while they do not establish a firm amount of time for FSL, Alberta Learning does recommend some minimums. The committee simply recommended that the system meet those minimums. That problem with its financial implications is still with us.

Our FSL teachers were also concerned about entry points. They were finding, for instance, that their classes would have students who had been in the program since Grade 1 as well as students who began only in Grade 6. The high school teachers would find that there were some students who started French in junior high and others who were just wanting to start. So the entry points were a concern, and we made some recommendations that would eliminate some of these difficulties.

We were also concerned with the lack of specialists in the teaching of FSL. Occasionally in FSL, someone who wasn't a specialist was chosen to teach it. That had to be addressed.

Another issue that came out was the possibility of a separate French immersion school. Could we solve our problems by running a separate, single track school rather than a dual track school? However it turned out not to be feasible.

There was also an expressed desire for other languages. What about Spanish? What about Japanese? What role could our system play in the teaching of these languages? We concluded that we were too small to do it.

And, of course, there was the reaction to French by a portion of the public. There's no doubt we had to deal with that. Some of our public have an enmity towards anything French and part of our criticism came from there as well.

These were the kinds of issues that emerged. What we did, as I said before, was to examine each issue. We then had a look at another dual track school to see how they were doing and what they were doing: École Varsity Acres School in Calgary. This dual track school was running very well, very smoothly. Everyone was happy with it. Parents from the English program as well as French immersion parents were enamoured with the whole school and the way it ran. It was great for our people to have a look at it, to see a situation that went very, very well, to glean many ideas for use in addressing some of our issues.

We made several important observations. For instance, they mixed their classrooms. At Varsity Acres, the students were mixing all the time. If they went on field trips, everybody went. The odd time they specialized with just sending the French immersion classes or just the English classes, but for as many things as they possibly could they mixed them all together.

That was the basis for what we wanted to do. We wrote our report and made a number of recommendations. Before the report was released to the public, each of the dual track schools had a chance to respond. The superintendent also had a chance to respond.

The district administration hasn't agreed with every recommendation. The financial recommendation in particular was a concern to them. We believe there may be ways, other than an increased budget, to resolve the issues, but we haven't got to that point yet.

However, as a result of all this action, the noise appears to have died down. We seem to have quelled a lot of the enmity. Both sides are beginning to say, "Well, maybe that is the way it appeared. Maybe we needed to do something about it." And, "Yes, we are beginning to understand where the other side is coming from, what their complaints are, and maybe we can begin to address them."

It's our hope that the French immersion program will continue to prosper and grow and be an effective part of our school programs. There's no reason why not. We hope that the dialogue that has started, and by clarifying the facts and the myths, that we have a better understanding.

Facilitator: Dr. Art Schwartz, University of Calgary

The next portion of the workshop involved a facilitated exploration by delegates of the implications for practice in their own schools and districts. The result was the identification of the following learnings:

1. Importance of harmony, respect, team work and collaboration between French immersion and English tracks, from the beginning and at every occasion which arises.

   Rationale: This would be the ideal state of affairs, in which suspicion and resentment within schools and school districts would have few chances to raise their heads.

2. Clear and open communication by French immersion and about French immersion is crucial in order to counter misperceptions.

   Rationale: This should be self-evident. The best way of making sure that non-French immersion interests do not become anti-French immersion interests is to be open about what we are doing and about the resources we consume in doing it.

3. The challenge is to sustain commitment in order to extend French immersion into the high school grades, with high achievement levels.

   Rationale: French immersion is now sufficiently widespread at the elementary levels to be a fact of life in Canadian education. While we cannot afford to become complacent about the presence and success of elementary French immersion, it nevertheless has a presence and momentum across the country which can be sustained without the same degree of effort it took to build it up and spread it out in the early years. It may now be time to shift resources to winning acceptance and penetration for French immersion at the secondary level.

Understanding the French Immersion Teacher
Implications for Training, Hiring, Supervising, and Supporting Your French Immersion Staff

Lise Mayne
Principal, Calgary Board of Education

Wayne Hampton
Principal, Wolf Creek SD

The following is an edited transcript of the presentation(s) and includes relevant overheads and handouts where available. This material has been reviewed and approved by presenter(s) for publication.

[Lise Mayne]

Good morning, everyone; it is my pleasure to be here.

While I am currently a school principal, I spent a year as a teacher recruitment consultant with the Calgary Board of Education as well as being involved in recruitment as a central-office Specialist for Second Languages.

In the Calgary Board of Education, recruiters do the central office work of screening the candidates and, at the school level, the principals do the next level of screening to find the appropriate staff for their schools. We feel that choosing their own staff is very important for the principals. Usually we have a team of people on-site to do the interviews. The principal, the assistant principal, and perhaps a teaching partner would be involved.

The principals began to express concern about the language proficiency of our interviewees. A person's own assessment of their language proficiency may be quite different from what is really expected in a French immersion classroom. We also had some people who would say, "Well, their French is good enough for Kindergarten." This concerned us, of course, because we feel that French needs to be of high quality through every level. At Kindergarten having an excellent model is crucial. We had to spend time explaining to colleagues not familiar with the program that the teacher is the only model of language, so their French needs to be of a very high quality.

We principals brainstormed the criteria that we should be looking for in teachers for the French immersion program. We looked at linguistic skills, second language teaching skills, and knowledge of second language practice. We looked at knowledge of culture, and not just francophone culture, because there are many forms of culture. It could be French culture in France; it could be a French culture in Alberta or Quebec. So we looked at knowledge of how French cultures fit with our culture in Alberta and in Calgary, particularly, because that's our area. Then we considered knowledge and beliefs about immersion.

I developed about ten questions that I would ask, besides the typical screening interview. In addition we also asked candidates to give us a written example of their writing, right on the spot. That was a criterion I put in place: that candidates not take the writing question home, look things up in the dictionary and then come back or fax it in. Some people found this quite

nerve wracking. I explained that we were not expecting perfection, but just getting an idea of how they would be writing in the classroom on a daily basis. A high level of proficiency in writing skills, I explained, was necessary for correcting the children's work. I found some people had good oral proficiency, but their writing skills were too weak.

As a recruitment consultant for the Calgary Board of Education, I was responsible for interviewing all French immersion candidates, K–12. When looking at what the teacher has to have to be a successful teacher in immersion, the following aspects would be necessary. French immersion teachers have to be able to provide realistic and meaningful tasks, have a good sense of culture and be able to provide that culture through songs and stories. They have to provide all strategies and objectives for language learning woven into all aspects of the curriculum, into all subjects.

The teachers we want at the CBE would understand that a student's self assessment is really important and that students need to be involved in looking for their own errors and correcting their own errors. Recent research on the French immersion process shows that some practices we have used for years are really not that sound. For instance, echoing back to the children is not the best way of correcting errors. It's more effective to do other things. So one of my questions was, "When a child makes errors, how would you go about correcting those errors?" Some candidates would respond by saying. "Well, I'd try a couple of times and if they didn't get it, I'd say it in English." What do they believe about French immersion? What do they understand about immersion? Through asking the kinds of questions that you know are important in second language learning, the responses will tell you a lot about the candidate's strategies.

Think about giving candidates scenarios. Give them examples of the kinds of things that may happen: "You're teaching a science lesson and the students just don't seem to be understanding that you're teaching a concept about aeronautics. What would you do?" They might reply, "Well, I might say it three times and if they didn't get it, I'd say it in English." They wouldn't say anything about vocabulary development or scaffolding. They might not give you any idea about all the pre-learning skills needed to understand the concept they are trying to teach. Also, the error correction strategies have to be emphasized. They have to understand that scaffolding is really important. That it is a second language teaching skill. They have to understand they are building on the base, asking the students what they know, what they see, even what the word avion means. The teachers have to understand that giving students a vocabulary base is really important.

A teacher said to me that the new math curriculum is so language rich and heavy that she believes it is more important now to start teaching the concepts in English. The reason it's language rich is that we are developing language. I asked, "If you're not going to use that language in French because it is too hard for them to understand, what do you need to do?" I explained that you need to go backwards and give them lots of experience. A concept such as "time" is hard for young learners to understand even in their first language. If you give them a worksheet to do with the words dîner, déjeuner, or petit déjeuner, without ever giving them any kind of experience, any kind of activity to help them understand what those words mean, it becomes even more complex.

Because the math program now is very language rich—that's one of the beauties of the program and it's really going to contribute to a lot more language development for our students—we have to be looking at the motivation of the teacher and the learner. The teacher has to believe in French immersion. There are teachers who believe that it's more like an FSL (core French) program. You have to scratch the surface and find out what they really believe about French immersion. What was their background? How did they learn a second language? What do they like about teaching a second language? What's exciting about it to them? What do they expect?

Some teachers who are native francophones, who come from a background where their own second language skills are not that strong, do have very high expectations of their students that may not be totally realistic. We have to help them understand what our culture is here. Explain where our students are coming from, and what they may expect. It is up to us to give them that background about our students and about our school. So when you, as an administrator who is not bilingual, go into the classroom to see how the students are learning, you can see that they are on task and that they seem to be engaging in French. You can see that they seem to be following what the teacher is saying and everything is going along fine. But you have to know the right questions to ask about what the expectations for language development are and how the objectives are assessed.

Wayne Hampton, Lise Mayne

Focus on linguistic skills development. Students become very fossilized in their errors, if they are not getting proper instruction in the language and that has to be done explicitly. Once our belief about French immersion was that to immerse them was enough. We believed that they would stop saying "Je suis fini", but they don't. There is much in French that needs to be taught explicitly. Ask teachers how they develop vocabulary. Look around the classroom. Where are the words posted? Kids need to be bathed in the vocabulary. In the Grade 1 classrooms that I have in my school right now it's just amazing. Words are everywhere and the students know where to look for them. The students' journals are full of really rich vocabulary.

You can ask the teacher to show you students' journals or other work, but how do you respond to written work? If you see a workbook or a journal full of red ink, is that a flag for you? The research says that correcting and correcting errors in red ink is not solving the problem. The students are not understanding what's happening and they continue to make the same errors. Teachers need to highlight the phrase being learned that week and work on that phrase only, not everything else under the sun, because learning this language is very complex and it takes time. This is an area for professional development.

Are the teachers pushing the students? Ask them that question. There's much research that says you need to push, you need to enhance. If they are teaching aeronautics, have they developed the vocabulary or are they speaking the equivalent of "baby talk" to the students?

Have they measured the vocabulary against, for instance, something like the provincial achievement tests, so that they know that the words they are teaching them are listed and that's the kind of vocabulary and level that they're expected to use?

Are your teachers providing authentic experiences for the students? Ask for an example of a field trip they've been on in French. Get an example of a guest speaker that they have had? What kind of films do they watch in class? Are all of the films English? If they say they can't find any films in French, offer to look into that with them. It's easier, obviously, to find the English speaker, the English field trip, or the English film, but you can find some things in French. You can find resources in French that can enhance the program.

How are parents involved? Some teachers don't believe that parents should come into the classroom, because it disrupts the learning or because they are only speaking English. But parents need to be involved. They can be our greatest advocates. They could be doing many things, even if they don't speak French. It's important to ask if parents are involved.

Are they communicating with the parents? Yesterday Judy Gibson spoke about that in her literacy presentation (please see "Literacy Development in a French Immersion Program", page 199). I think that it is really important. A teacher recently said to me, "How often do I have to say this to the parents? I said it back in September and October." Well, if it's now May and you're on a new unit, you do have to explain it again, because parents need that background and understanding about why you're doing this field trip or why you're doing the spelling program this way. As Judy said, you can feel very desperate as a parent, when you are at home and you receive a homework sheet all in French and you can't read it. You feel like you can't help your child. Then you start questioning if your child should be in French immersion. So the teacher has to be the key to keeping that communication open. That's how you'll keep your program vital. As we interview, we need to be asking questions that reveal how the teacher will be working with the parents to develop second language skills and a love of learning in French.

How are teachers using technology? Many excellent Web sites use French. As was said yesterday, French is the second most used language on the Internet. Students should be using those Web sites. Are they doing things in French on the computer?

These are the aspects that are really important as you recruit and support your French immersion teachers. Find a strong mentor in your school or in another school that's close by. It is really important for beginning teachers to work with that person to develop all these special skills and qualities. Support and opportunities for professional development are required to enhance the skills of teachers hired to work in the French immersion program.

[Wayne Hampton]

I want to address the recruitment process, the training process, and supporting French immersion teachers. A colleague from Red Deer, Doris Swensrude, should also be here today, but was unable to attend due to a family illness. As we are good friends who have worked together, I will cover her presentation as well. My comments are based on my involvement with a small rural K–12 French immersion program in Wolf Creek School Division in the town of Lacombe where I have been principal for the past 13 years. I will share my perceptions, observations, and experiences combined with Doris's involvement as a teacher in Red Deer.

When I think about the 11 teachers involved in our French immersion program, I realize we really haven't had to do much recruiting. We've enjoyed a high level of stability and retention. That has worked very well in our favour, as you can well appreciate. Of those 11 teachers, one has been with the program more than six years, two for more than ten years; four have been with us 3–4 years; three are in their second year, and one is new to the profession and to the program. Three of our teachers are graduates of French immersion programs (K to 12 and teacher education) in Alberta.

Probably the key variable, or one of the key variables, to retaining a teacher in the program is the sense of belonging to a community and being a member of the school. Certainly as a school we have a big role to play in creating that sense of belonging. One thing that we do in our school is teaming. I'll talk about that a bit later to give you some specific examples. Teaming gets people working together: you don't work in isolation; you feel like you are part of the whole with a desire to take on the ownership of the program and to stay with the program.

The idea of belonging and being a part of the school, the program and the community is really important. But the bottom line is, no matter the program, the primary goal of any recruiting process is to come up with the best candidate to do the job. Since we recruit on a team basis, the fact that I do not speak French is not a hindrance. My assistant principal has marginal French, and we always involve a lead teacher from our immersion program in the interviewing and selection process. Their primary role is to question the candidates to assess their language skills in French. We need good English skills too, because our French immersion people teach the English component, with formal introduction of English beginning at Grade 3. My assistant principal and I can assess their English skills quickly through the interview process etc., but the French immersion lead teacher's role is to help us out with their French language skills. We also have candidates do a written response to assess their writing skills.

The tendency, and this is just an observation, has been to hire anglophone French speaking teachers in our program, although we do have two francophones from Quebec who have been with the program a long time. The hiring of anglophones perhaps occurs because of the nature of our community and because these folks are involved in teaching the English language part of the program. It's an important consideration. Recruiting out of the province, which is not something that we've had to do so far, brings with it a certain feeling of temporariness by the candidate.

But, as the recruitment of French immersion teachers becomes more difficult, more out-of-province recruiting will be necessary and we're going to have to become a lot more creative in helping new teachers become an integral part of the community. Integrating is difficult if you have family elsewhere in Canada. You may think that you will go to Alberta for a year or two, but chances are you won't make a long term commitment. I think we're looking for people who can stay for a period. The real but longer-term solution is for our training institutions to attract the best students possible and to give them the best training, so that when they leave, they are committed to French immersion and have the skills and expertise necessary to allow them to be successful as French immersion teachers.

Based on my experiences with our programs over the last thirteen years, and as a parent with children in the French immersion program, I think the first thing that needs to happen

when we begin training teachers is to create a mind set. We need to create the mind set that when a student comes into French immersion that is the only option available to students. I see a tendency to move a student into the English program if they are not doing well. We want to avoid this unless it is absolutely necessary, especially in a small community like ours, where, in the town of Lacombe, only 10 percent of our 2,300–2,400 students are in French immersion. Nor do we want to create the perception that the English program is the dumping ground for students who are doing poorly in immersion.

Another observation that I've made over the years is that French immersion should be open to everyone. It is not for the elite. The parents in our communities who register their children in the French immersion program are generally of two categories. There are those parents who are well educated, very involved, very dedicated and committed to the best education possible for their child. And there are those who register their children because they are exceptionally gifted and the challenge of a second language program will be really good for them. That could be true, but it is often that child with whom the French immersion teacher experiences some frustrations. And it is usually in the form of behaviour problems. The tendency in our teacher training programs is to focus on the cognitive domain or academic excellence, but I'm not sure that teachers are well enough prepared to deal with the behaviour issues. So the French immersion teacher may let misbehaviour go for a while and then decide that this child might be better in the English program. Let's face it, the child's behaviour is not going to change because they move over to the English program. So I think it is important to keep that in mind when training teachers. The cognitive preparation is important, but teachers need to have skills, strategies and expertise in dealing with the affective domain, the social-emotional behaviour of these students. Because these children are generally very bright, they can learn the language but they can be disruptive to the rest of the class because they are not fully engaged. French immersion is not intended to be just for gifted students.

Other areas that I think our training institutions could be focussing on are greater inclusion strategies. Teachers need more training in how to deal with students who require resource or Learning Assistance Centre (LAC) support, because in small schools such as ours, we're not able to hire a resource teacher or special education teacher. Assistance must be provided in an inclusive way. However, I think we have been creative in that area. We have a 1.2 FTE LAC teacher in our English program; pro-rated based on the size of our French immersion program we are entitled to a .2 FTE teacher for resource/LAC-type assistance. We did that for one year, but found .2 FTE was relatively ineffective. So the immersion team recommended that rather than .2 FTE teacher we should hire a teacher assistant. We hired a French speaking teacher assistant who has been in our school for five years now and does an awesome job. Her focus is mainly with French language skills. She also works with them in English language skills at the Grade 3 level, because that's when English is formally introduced, but her primary focus is French reading and oral skills. She takes each Grade 3 student every week for about 15 minutes and reads with them. They also have a home reading program that she coordinates. This TA runs programs after school to help them in their language skills. This has been a real success and complements our program at a relatively low cost.

Another area that teacher-training institutions need to be sensitive to is the fact that most of these people are going to be teaching all of the subjects. There is no such thing as a math specialist and a science specialist. They teach everything, and in our case they teach the English

Language Arts too. We need to be sure they have the skills to handle all of that. Music is a really tough one for us because our music teacher—who is phenomenal—is English speaking, so the immersion teachers teach Music to the immersion students.

This is what teachers said when I asked for their opinion on what teacher training institutions need to address more fully:

- Greater opportunities to meet with and watch practising immersion teachers at all levels for learning about strategies for delivery, classroom management, how to encourage French in the classroom and so on.
- More familiarity with the curriculum and available resources was another issue.
- Having the time to walk through all curriculums and not just one or two.
- Strategies for inclusion and offering resource assistance support in the classroom setting.
- Greater knowledge and training in second language acquisition.
- Children's French literature courses.
- Enhanced training in acquisition of proper or correct French grammar and syntax. More strategies to help students with distinguishing between spoken and written French.
- More strategies to help the student master cultural aspects of the language such as idioms.

So those were some suggestions that teachers in our program said the training institutions should focus on to better prepare them to take on a French immersion job.

Our support strategies can't stop once the teacher joins our staffs; we need to support both the French immersion teacher and the French immersion program. We need do more than simply tolerate the program. It doesn't matter whether I or any other principal speaks French. We are there as a principal to support every program that we have, English or French. If a principal is not prepared to support a particular program, then we either need to get rid of the principal or get rid of the program; I hope it's get rid of the principal. Principals have to be actively engaged in all aspects of the program to ensure that the students and the school fare well. I mentioned earlier that I have no fluency in French, but that doesn't keep me from being intimately involved in the program. One thing that I do is have a lead teacher take responsibility for coordinating the immersion program along with me. The lead teacher makes sure that the immersion team has all the materials that come from Alberta Learning and so on. We have team meetings where I'm involved as the chairperson and they have team meetings where I'm not. It's important for me, for any principal, to understand that teaching French is different from teaching English as a first language, particularly in specific grammar. Teaching grammar in the French language is important and as an evaluator I may not realize that. If I go into an English language arts program and the teacher is spending a lot of time teaching grammar, I will probably get a little edgy and nervous and upset. To get around that, we've used a mentoring/peer coaching/teaming system. If we do get a new teacher on staff, I'm involved in the evaluation, but our mentor teacher is also involved in working with the teacher to make sure that they are approaching the language correctly and to keep me well informed on how the teacher is doing in that area—not behind the teacher's back but as a collaborative process.

As administrators, we have to be available for guidance and assistance, to be directly involved in the program at all times. We cannot afford to be passive and uninvolved. We do need to be models and risk-takers for our students, and this is probably an area where I fall

down. I'm very shy about trying to speak the language, because I'm a shy person. I'm very timid about my pronunciation and I know it is an area where I could do a better job of risk-taking because the kids would love to help me along. That's something that I'm going to focus on in the future.

We also need to be sensitive to the complex political implications of French immersion. For those of you who attended the session on the Canmore experience with dual track schools, with Bill Brownlee, yesterday, I think that we've done a marvellous job in that area. I've lived in the Lacombe area for almost 18 years. I remember some comments that were made in the community, when French immersion first started. In the 13 years I've been overseeing the program, I have never had a parent come in and say, "You just favour the French immersion program." I think we have been successful because we treat all programs as equally important. The French immersion parents appreciate everything we do for them, as do the English parents.

Similarly, when it comes to dealing with parents, I find that parents of French immersion students are more involved. But if their children weren't in French immersion, they would be just as involved. They tend to be the parents who are involved in your school council. This year is the first one in eight or ten years that half our school council executive is non-French immersion parents: two parents from the English program and two from the French program. Usually they are all from the French immersion program. That's never been a problem, because they've always been very sensitive that they are there to represent the whole school and whatever decisions we make impact the whole school, not just one program. So they've been very good about that. But we need to be there for the teachers, when parents get anxious, when Johnny's gone home and said, "The teacher's not teaching me the right French. My teacher doesn't know how to speak French, etc, etc." We have to be there to support the teachers.

We also need to be creative and sensitive to the challenges faced by a teacher teaching all the subjects. It can be a lot of work, and when you compound that with split grades, it becomes even more work.

We need to maximize the inclusion of immersion students in all school activities. Involving the children in school-wide activities, involving them in team activities and mixing up the French immersion students and the English students helps. Since we have such a small proportion of French immersion students, 90 out 450, segregating them would be easy. Designating a wing of the school as the French immersion wing would be easy. Nevertheless, we don't do that. They are mixed throughout the school—classrooms and school-wide activities. We need to be seen as always proactive.

Some key strategies that we employ to address these areas in our immersion program are what I call teaming, teaming, and more teaming. We need to be together as a team. I believe that the strength of a team comes from its diversity and the success of a team comes from its ability to work together. In order for a team to work together, we have to create opportunities for them to get together and do some work. In our school we have most teams with site-based decision-making. We have a budget team, a technology team, a phys. ed. team, program teams, grade level teams. That's one area where our rather bizarre grade form works to our advantage. We have 200 Grade 6 students in our school and at this time of the year, when achievement

tests are nearing, seven teachers have an opportunity to work together preparing their students for the achievement test, planning their programs and so on. So our teams are very important.

We have a French immersion team at our school, which meets two to four times per year. We also have a K–12 French immersion team that meets every two months. This year, as part of our school education plan focus, each team chose a program area to focus on to address what was provincial goal number one - excellence in learning. On staff meeting days, we dismiss at noon, have a very short business meeting at one o'clock, perhaps for half an hour or forty-five minutes, and then the teams get together. The French team gets together and they focus on their goal. You would not believe the dialogue it has created, the talk it has created about teaching and learning. We involve our teacher assistants in those meetings, too. We feel it is just as important though they're not the professional, not the trained person. They need to be involved in the team meetings.

Another program that we take advantage of is the French monitor program. We've had a series of them over the years. We involve them in the meetings, too. So we have the staff teaming. We have our program teaming. One of our French immersion teachers functions as a liaison or a lead person in passing on any of my thoughts or concerns. As well, we do meet periodically where I chair the meeting and we talk about our program. It's really successful. We have a very strong program. I think if you talk to anybody who has experienced our program or come to view it, they would agree that we have a really strong program. It's small but it's mighty.

Our K–12 team focuses more and more on professional development and less and less on planning specific activities such as cultural events. Mrs. Lutz, the assistant principal at J.S. McCormick with the K–1–2 program, coordinates the K - 12 team and she and I work together on it. At meetings when it gets to the PD part, we are welcome to stay, but the teachers speak in French. I think that is so important, to give our immersion people an opportunity to be together to use their French at an adult level, not just at their grade level.

Another key strategy for the success of our program and supporting the French immersion teacher is PD, PD and more PD. I am so proud of the opportunities that we give teachers and support staff in our school for PD experiences. Money is available. One of the concerns of our French immersion teachers, when I sought their opinion in another school, was that they didn't have any PD money to take in some of the PD for English program courses they teach. That isn't true in our school. Our teachers can take advantage of PD for French as well as for English. As an administrator, I'm committed to PD. We allocate about $750 per teacher for PD, which in my mind is generous. So money is available to support teachers' attendance at workshops, conferences, and inservices and any of our school education plan team goals, such as visiting other programs, etc., to cover sub costs. It's all there. We have always applied for the federal in-service grant in conjunction with Wild Rose School division. For next year, I am excited and pleased to say that Red Deer Public, Red Deer Separate, Wolf Creek and Wild Rose are going to submit a joint proposal. We'll probably get more money, which is fine, but the other beautiful thing about it is, it is going to get more French immersion teachers together on a more regular basis, to give them an opportunity to dialogue and attend in-services. That will be a very positive experience.

Other areas that our French immersion teachers suggested that we could do to support them as French immersion teachers, some of which we have control over and some we don't, include:

- Eliminating the curriculum lag. I know that's an Alberta Learning issue, but it is an issue that annoys people. The lag time is consistent. When we implement a new curriculum, French immersion's waiting for resources. Waiting and waiting. It is annoying. I think that's something that needs to be addressed, as well as ensuring that resources are available to teachers to teach the curriculum. We're struggling in some English programs, let alone some of our French.
- Bringing in French cultural performances. We do bring a number in over the course of the year.
- Buddying up new teachers. We do this in both English and French. Whether they're new to the profession or new to our school, I think it is important for them to have a mentor or somebody to turn to, somebody to whom they can say, "What do you do here? How can I get through this one?" The whole peer coaching and teaming concept works very well.
- Taking advantage of the French monitor program.
- Providing resource room assistance for French immersion students. That's a tough one, because of money. I would appreciate having a half-time teacher, and perhaps that's one disadvantage of not having our K-6 program under one roof and one principalship. Perhaps then we could have a half-time teacher.
- Engaging students and involving parents in a home reading program. That's been ongoing in our school and is appreciated by the parents and by the teachers.
- Working with and supporting our local CPF chapter. I have usually been the administrative liaison with our CPF chapter. It started up when the program started 15 years ago, and the first group of students who went through was a powerful group of students. I'm glad I had the chance to teach them. After a few years, the chapter folded because of internal disagreements they weren't making any headway. Two or three years ago, I suggested the reestablishment of a Lacombe CPF Chapter to some of the parents and there was interest. They've done very well since.
- Continued support of PD activities, continued support of teaming, maximizing opportunities for teachers to get together with other French immersion teachers (simply involves providing the cost of sub time). I don't mean it needs to happen regularly, because you need to be sensitive to the students' programs, but giving teachers a chance to get together to visit other programs, especially where we're at in a small program, is so important.
- More extensive early reading intervention. This was a concern that hasn't been expressed at our level.
- French resources for computers that are compatible with the Windows NT system. At the junior and senior high level, they felt that was seriously lacking. Of course, the Telus site provides a fair bit of material.
- Greater availability of French resources.

I'd like to conclude by saying: If a school is going to offer a French immersion program, support it the same way that you would support any other program. It's a wonderful program. I think that being principal in a school that's only an English program school would be mundane. A dual track school is so much richer and it is so much more fun. My daughters, who are in Grades 5 and 7, have had nothing but positive experiences.

French Immersion is an excellent program with an outstanding track record. We can be justifiably proud of the program's accomplishments since its inception some 30 years ago. It's a program open to all students; it is not elitist; it is not a program for the gifted but an opportunity to enrich the lives of Canadian children.

Facilitator: Lise May

The next portion of the workshop involved a facilitated exploration by delegates of the implications for practice in their own schools and districts. The result was the identification of the following learnings:

1. Alberta Learning should provide some guidelines for hiring teachers in the immersion program which would serve all boards in the province. The universities and teachers should also be involved in establishing these guidelines.

   Rationale: Administrators lack information regarding the guidelines for hiring in the immersion program. Many of them do not speak French and they do not understand what is required of efficient immersion teachers. It would help to have a list of questions for use when interviewing teachers, with appropriate answers identified. At this point, it is up to every school board to determine the guidelines and many do not know what these guidelines should be.

2. More support is needed for teachers. Provide time in the calendar year for professional development. More support is needed for principals. Provide more workshops and more preparation to fulfill their role.

   Rationale: Many school boards feel very alone and therefore without any support to help the teachers and the administrators who are involved with the immersion program. This presents a major problem for the small school boards who feel very isolated and also forgotten. Alberta Learning has a very important role to play in organizing workshops for everyone involved.

3. To help staff the rural schools, encourage student teachers to do their practicums in smaller centres using subsidies as incentives.

   Rationale: Rural schools find it very difficult to encourage student teachers to do their practicums in rural centers. It would help if there were subsidies which could be used as an incentive to find these teachers. Presently, student teachers prefer to work in urban centers where more choices of schools are offered and where more job opportunities exist.

4. Have a university representative come and talk to Grade 12 students to encourage them to register in the education faculty. Also provide information on available help for those students, such as bursaries.

Rationale: Everyone agrees that we do not have enough immersion teachers to fill all the positions. The future is very bleak. We need to encourage our high school students to register in the education faculty. One of the ways would be to have a university representative (i.e. Faculté Saint-Jean) visit the schools and explain the several job opportunities that exist at the end of their studies. It seems that too many students do not go into education because of a lack of information.

5. Administrators should make it a point to support their immersion staff and to look after their welfare. They should be very sensitive to their special needs.

   Rationale: Administrators have a double challenge when they work in an immersion school. One of their many duties should be to make a point of supporting their staff and to look after their welfare. This would possibly encourage their teachers to remain in their school. Unfortunately, too many administrators forget to do so because they do not understand the very special heavy work load that their immersion staff face every day.

6. There should be a course offered at the university level that would talk more specifically about the difference between the French and English cultures.

   Rationale: Teachers and administrators do not always understand the difference between the French and the English cultures. The best way to solve this problem would be to offer a course that would explain these differences. At this point, we assume that people will get the information by themselves but it is not always the case.

Appendix F

- Parnell, Rick. **"Marketing French Immersion in Alberta: A Conceptual Framework."** n.d. Unpublished.
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- Lundrigan, Suzanne, Pierrette Messier-Peet, and Carmen Mykula. **"Program Promotion: Generating Interest and Involvement."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.*
  Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999.
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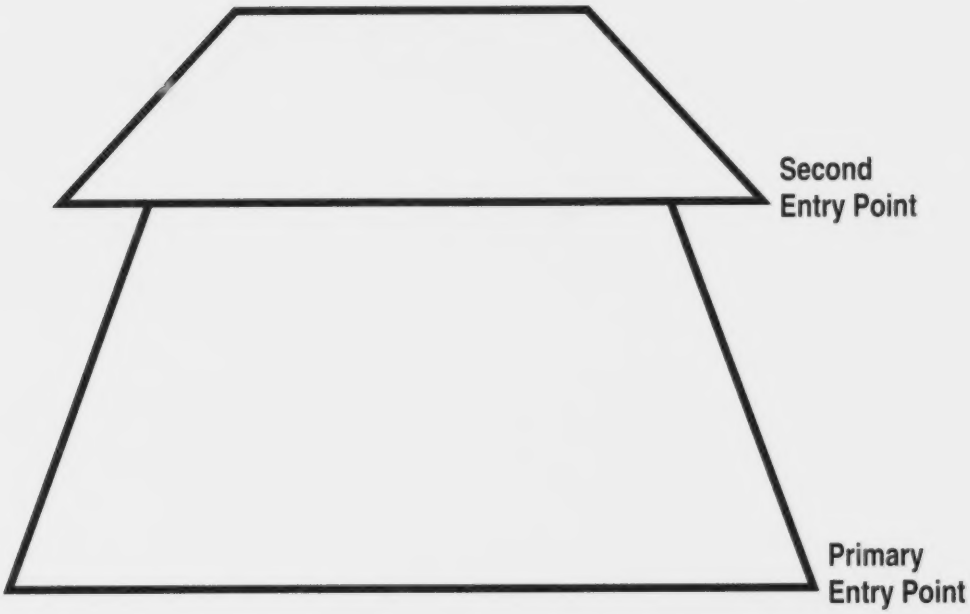
Marketing French Immersion in Alberta: A Conceptual Framework

by

Rick Parnell M.B.A.

Recruitment and Retention Profile For French Immersion Programs



The diagram above represents the pattern of enrolment in French immersion programs, up to and including Grade 9. In essence, there are two entry points for customers of French immersion. The first point is at the start of elementary school (*early immersion*), with the second point at the start of Junior High School (*late immersion*). Though there may be some activity in recruiting for preschool programs, recruitment strategies are focussed on these two main entry points. Once enrolment has been achieved, there tends to be a gradual attrition of enrolled students as students and their families opt out of the program during succeeding years. The reasons for this attrition are important determinants to the success of a particular immersion program.

In addition to the importance of recruitment, one of the key arguments I will make in this paper is, that for long-term success, the recognition of the critical importance of customer retention, and the true cost of each enrolment that is later lost must be addressed as part of an overall marketing strategy for French immersion.

What is French Immersion, and who pays for it?

Federal Funding regulations recognize kindergarten and elementary programs that provide instruction in French for 75% of .the school day as being eligible for French Immersion grants. For Junior and Senior High schools the requirement drops to 60%. In Alberta, a French immersion program is often defined as one in which the French language is used as the language of instruction according to these percentages. French immersion programs (i.e. those meeting the Alberta guidelines) are available in approximately 160 schools in Alberta.

In addition to the French immersion grants, the funding framework for education in Alberta provides a basic amount for each student in the province, which is accessed by whichever public school the student attends. In addition to this basic grant, students also activate funding sources through initiatives such as Early Literacy funding, Special Needs, etc. In districts where all the funds available to individual French immer on programs are based on student numbers, there can be a considerable incentive for individual schools to attract and maintain a full capacity of students in order to ensure the highest returns through economies of scale. Of course, retention relies on the optimal mix of students and staff, both in terms of numbers and commitment.

In the 1998/99 school year, fewer than 27,000 students were enrolled in French immersion programs at all levels in Alberta, representing something in the neighborhood of 5% of the total available school population for that grade. The recruitment rate at the ECS level for French immersion has gradually dropped from 7.7% in 1992/93 to 6.6% in 1998/99. Grade 6 enrolment in 1997/98 was about 5% of the available school population for that grade level. Grade 7 enrollment in French immersion programs was also around 5% of the available school population in 1998/99 (suggesting that relatively the same percentage of the school population chooses to join late French immersion as choose to discontinue French immersion after Grade 6). The percentage of the Grade 9 school population still enrolled in French immersion as of 1998/99 was about 4.7%.

The Market for Education

"Going to elementary school is the only activity that is compulsory in Canada. For that reason, elementary school enrolments are the one area where demographics can predict the future with tremendous accuracy." (*David K. Foot in Boom Bust & Echo 2000*)
According to Statistics Canada's 1996 Census, about 7% of Alberta's population were between the ages of 0 and 4. This means that between 1997/1998 and 2000/2001, some 195,000 students could be expected to enter the school system, or on average about 48,750 each year. Based on Government of Alberta education statistics, the average enrolment in Alberta for Grade 1 for 1997/1998 to 1998/1999 was 44,450 students, implying that enrolment could be over 50,000 for each of the 1999/2000 and 2000/2001 school years.

The Market For French Immersion

French immersion is a subset of the total market offering for those seeking an education. This is a critical point to keep in mind, because the potential customer for French immersion is first and foremost someone who is seeking a quality education for her or someone in her guardianship. A parent or guardian who makes a choice "not to use" the regular programs offered by the public school system program offerings does so because she perceives some positive differentiation, and an advantage to be gained through a French immersion program.

One of the first questions that must be asked therefore is: "What are the base educational requirements that must be exceeded in order to draw a potential customer during the recruitment phase?" One might ask: "What are the basic product attributes that must be present for any education offering; and how is immersion perceived to affect the value (or contribute to an added value) of that basic education offering?"

These questions which impact on both the recruitment and the retention strategies go to defining the market segment most likely to seek out or "buy into" the French immersion concept. With primary education, the decision- makers are extremely unlikely to be the consumer of the product. The "consumer" of the education product only affects the decision through the parent or guardian's perception of her needs and abilities. The greater influence on the decision will likely be found in the decision maker's background, including: the education decisions that were made for them and their perceptions about the value of those decisions (which includes and is affected by their experiences and the experiences of their peer group with French language instruction); their perceptions about the world around them and what skills are needed for "success" now and in the future; and their economic position and the impact of the education decision on their other lifestyle choices.
For some, child rearing will be viewed as an opportunity to "recreate" themselves. However, I suspect that the majority looks at child rearing with an optimistic view toward creating a "better" life and the greatest of possible opportunities for their children. Whatever the criterion the decision-maker uses to define ultimate success in child rearing, education must be looked upon as a key input in the production of a complete human being. The parent or guardian's definition of "complete" will initially determine the education supply alternatives they examine and the choices they make. The success of their choices will be continually measured against that definition, though the definition of "complete" may be altered to varying degrees by changing circumstances and perceptions over time.

Factors Affecting the Education Decision

In January of 1999 the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages published a paper entitled "Motivations for School Choices by Eligible Parents Outside Quebec." The study was based on the opinions of 81 parents interviewed in four Canadian cities (*including Calgary*) through a total of eight facilitated group meetings. The study divided the factors motivating the education decision into six categories: Technical, Psychological, Demographic, Economic, Political and Cultural. While the study was aimed at parents who have the constitutional right to have their children educated in French (*under Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*), the findings might be helpful in determining the motivations for the education decision generally, especially as it relates to language. Although the focus of this paper is on the decision as it relates to immersion in the public schools (*which do not involve Section 23 rights*), I have been able to draw some insights that may be helpful in developing marketing plans for immersion programs.

Technical Factors

The study labelled all those factors that create the opportunity for choice in the education decision as "technical." An example of a technical factor would include the mere existence of an accessible alternate school program. The technical factors establish the size of the overall target market from which an individual school might hope to attract students. For example, each school will have a geographic region from within which the school is more or less accessible. Transportation related issues, such as busing, are technical factors, which in part, determine accessibility.

Just as with any other product or service, technical factors must be addressed before a school can be said to be making an education offering to market. A school must have a program of instruction that meets established standards and at least matches the quality of instruction available in other competing schools. Furthermore, it must provide a pleasant and safe learning environment, with extra-curricular activities comparable to those available in alternative learning institutions. Finally it must have physical access by the community or communities it wishes to serve.

One of the important issues that affect French immersion (*and all non- traditional school programs*) in the public school system is in the physical space made available for such programs. Rather than taking the most positive and productive approach of locating programs in the communities with the highest market demand or potential for success of such programs, school jurisdictions will purposely locate these programs in "empty" schools. These schools are often in the oldest buildings with high maintenance needs and the lowest levels of modernization. As a result these programs are likely disadvantaged from the start, facing much higher costs associated with meeting the basic technical factors.

Psychological Factors

The psychological factors affecting the education choice are more intangible and more difficult to measure than are the technical factors. However, these factors are extremely important in positioning a language education offering. For example, the self-esteem of both guardian and student combined with their perceptions about the benefits associated with the acquisition of two languages (*and French in particular*) will have a critical impact on both the initial education decision, and on the potential for success within a language differentiated education system.

An immersion school program must make its offering conscious of the many psychological factors that might come into play, and intent on differentiating its product offering and positioning it within the psychological factors that will come into play for its target market. For example, the critical student mass required for the success of an immersion program located in a mainly unilingual English neighbourhood may be purposely suited to attract students whose parents speak no French at all, and will structure its marketing materials as to allay any fears that parents may have about sending their children through French Immersion. Another program, whose strategy involves attracting fewer students and providing more focussed instruction to improve the odds of academic success, may discourage enrolment of children who do not have at least one parent or guardian with a working knowledge of French. In either case, the strategic direction of the immersion program must be a conscious one, and the image to be achieved in the community in which the school operates must also be a conscious one.

Demographic Factors

Demographic factors are going to have the greatest single impact on the education decision. Such demographic factors will include the level and form of the decision makers' education, the family's linguistic background, the age of the parents/guardians, and the family's geographic and economic stability.

The 1996 Statistics Canada Census suggests that just over 2% of Alberta's population consider themselves to be either French or bilingual in French and English. This figure in itself may have an effect on the psychological factors affecting the education choice. If guardians perceive Alberta as their "world," French might be viewed as unnecessary or unimportant. However, factors such as the family's geographic and linguistic history, education, and work experience may have a significant counter balancing impact on this perception.

As outlined earlier, age demographics will, of course, affect the number of school age children available within a particular region as well. Extrapolating from the average expected annual elementary school enrolment of more than 50,000, minimum new enrolments in Francophone programs alone over the next few years should average more than 1,000 students per year, assuming French and bilingual parents are predisposed to choosing French language education and assuming school age children are evenly distributed across the population. A particular school may choose to broaden its access to market by appealing to a wider demographic group, or pursue a strategy that narrows the demographic with a hope to create a higher quality product and/or secure a longer-term loyalty and market retention.

The fact that enrolment in French Immersion at the Grade 1 level has been in the range of 6% to 6.5% in recent years, suggests that immersion programs do have a wider appeal and a perceived value to families who do not view themselves as bilingual in French and English. In effect, the desire for bilingualism and the perceived value in multilingualism and multiculturalism makes French Immersion marketable to a broader demographic. However, the further removed are the factors of linguistic and family background, the more important other factors will become in the education decision. To put it another way, if families do not feel an intrinsic pressure to choose some form of "French" education, then the education decision will be based on factors other than language. Marketing efforts that put an emphasis on "French for the sake of French" will be less successful in attracting these families.

Other demographic factors that are likely to affect the education decision, especially with respect to the question of language, may include the educational background of the parents/guardians, the age of the decision- makers, and the gender of the main education decision-maker. The family's geographic stability may also be important in relation to the perceived ease of transference from one school program to another. In this regard, the issue of standards within different French Immersion programs may also be significant.

Economic Factors

The perception of future economic return from the education decision is likely to be an important element for some parents or guardians. Much has been written and said about the importance of multilingualism in the developing global economy. To compete in world markets, Alberta companies will likely have to hire or train multilingual staff and consultants. Therefore, It seems likely that, all else being equal, businesses would be willing to pay some premium for multilingual workers. Certainly, current evidence suggests that bilingual Canadians earn about 3% more than their unilingual counterparts. However, little can be stated definitively in terms of future individual economic benefits and marketing material is best to deal with the subject through a more subtle value-added approach. In other words, one might assume that if the parent or guardian perceives that a student is better prepared for the world through multiple language education, then it stands to reason that such a student would

stand to be better rewarded, economically and otherwise. Marketing strategies that attempt to affect the perception of economic benefits will have to be balanced carefully with materials that are aimed at other psychological and political perceptions.

Political Factors

Similar to Economic factors, political factors, as they are defined in the study, seem to be more factors of psychological perception than factors that can be defined and used from a marketing perspective. However, in Canada political factors also deserve some special mention since the temperature of the national unity debate will likely affect the decision making for some of those considering French immersion as an education option. For some decision makers political factors are rooted in demographic factors such as linguistic heritage or psychological factors concerning the perceived benefits to be gained through knowledge of French. Some others who perceive a value in any second language may be persuaded to choose or reject French on the weight of political factors.

One could argue that it is dangerous to pursue purely political factors when positioning an education offering, because any French immersion program requires long term customer loyalty to be effective, while purely political motivations are more akin to fads. There would almost certainly be considerable erosion of the student population if the expectations of the person making the politically motivated decision do not materialize. The continued motivation and sense of belonging on the part of the student may be one means of converting the political short sale into a long-term customer.

The politicization of the "French language issue" can also have a detrimental effect on demand for immersion schools. Some rational adults, who might otherwise perceive value in multilingualism, can be dissuaded by the heat of politically motivated arguments. This resistance, once begun, can be difficult to overcome. Some parents will go to considerable lengths and expense to have their language education objectives met without French immersion.

Cultural Factors

While cultural factors may also be argued to be a subset of psychological and demographic factors, they are significant enough to the education decision to warrant specific consideration. The psychological elements of cultural factors go to the sense of belonging or need to belong to a distinctive cultural community, and the level of associated prestige with bilingualism. The demographic elements of cultural factors are to be found in the cultural and perhaps even linguistic heritage of the family and on their values concerning the linkage to their roots. (*Many individuals consider -themselves to be of French heritage, though they may not have rights under Section 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.*) The marketing strategy will have to be aware of the significance of these factors within the targeted market, with a conscious decision made with respect to the commitments made to address these values.

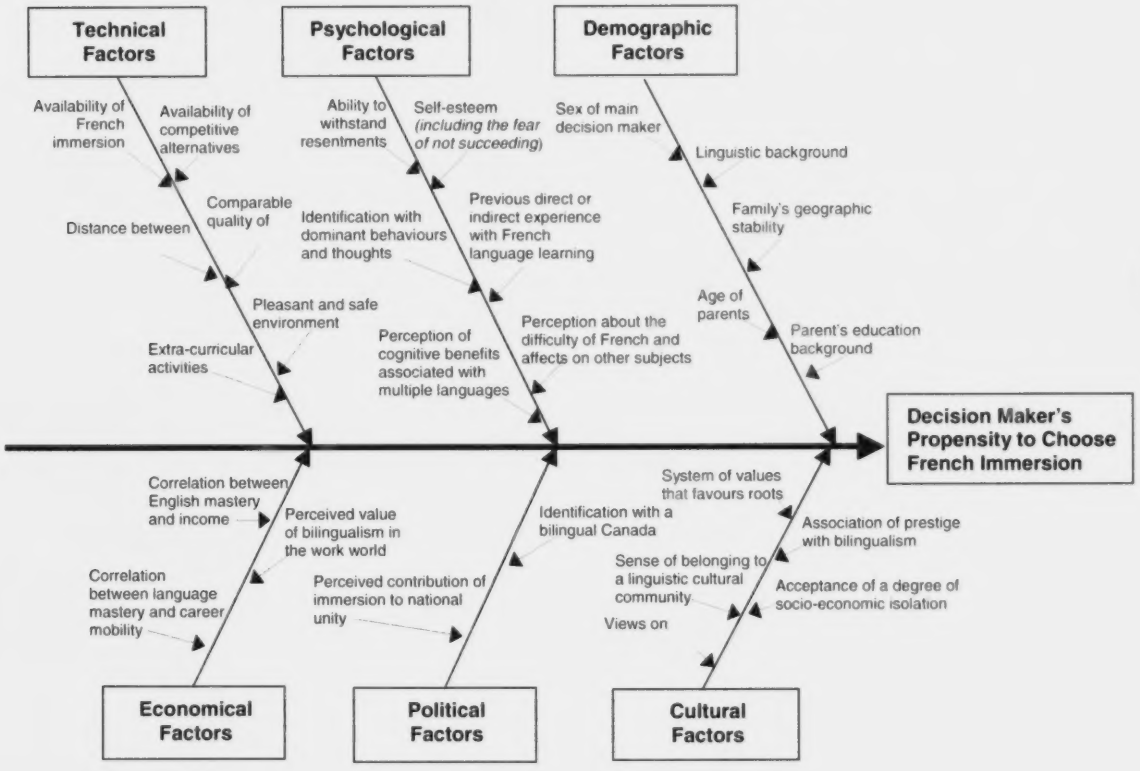
Canadian culture, more broadly, might be thought to raise questions about the value and effect of multiculturalism, as well as a more universal prestige in bilingualism or multilingualism. Views on these factors and on the future of "Canadian culture" will likely have a significant impact on education decision- makers, regardless of other roots. In fact, I

spoke with one family whose background was English and based in the Maritimes, but who had along family tradition of sending children through French immersion. This cultural heritage strongly valued multilingualism.

The French Immersion Education Decision

The following diagram, adapted from one produced in the Federal Government of Canada study, suggests a model for viewing the education decision, as it will likely exist in the mind of the decision maker(s) .The strength of the various factors will likely vary from individual to individual, but a French immersion program must understand and be prepared to describe its offering with respect to each of these factors. Furthermore, since there is no direct financial consequence in choosing a French immersion program over a regular public school program, these factors establish the perceived value of an immersion offering.

Factors Considered
When Parents Decide on a French Immersion Program



Recruitment Strategies

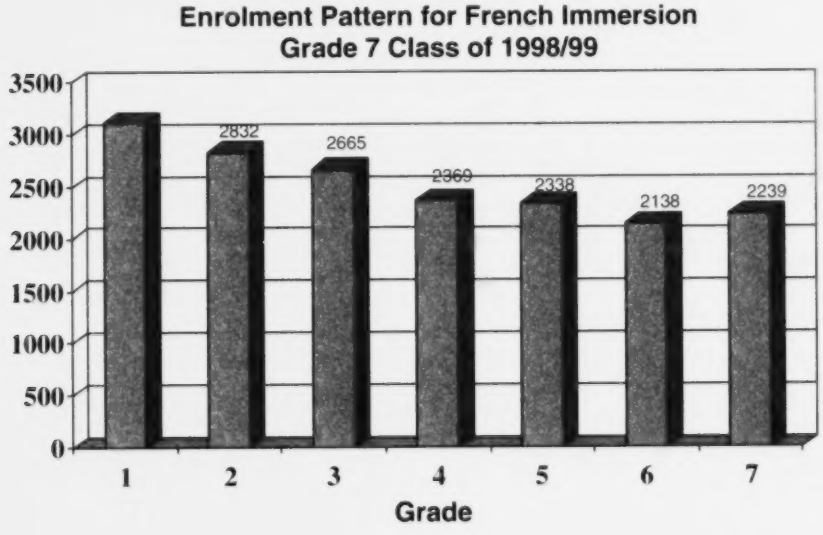
The question that must be raised from the recruitment perspective is: "What is a reasonable, achievable and sustainable market share for French immersion in Alberta?" Should schools be satisfied with the 6% to 7% achieved at the elementary level over the last decade, or is the success of the program important enough to warrant the additional marketing effort necessary to push enrolment up above 10%. Some might even suggest that a stretch target of 20% is both attainable and desirable. Assuming that between 40,000 to 50,000 students enter the

system each year for the next few years, reaching the 10% market share of new recruits means attracting 1,600 to 2,000 additional students. In other words, enrolment in French immersion would have to increase by 60% to 70%.

Since current levels have been achieved with (*as I understand*) virtually no marketing effort, it is reasonable to assume that recruitment can be significantly increased if the Alberta regions pursue combined and independent marketing efforts. Just as Universities recruit in high schools, French immersion programs should be bringing their messages to the parents of children in neighbourhood day-cares, local "swim and gyms", and other settings where parents of preschool children might meet. An aggressive marketing program might even reach parents or potential parents many years in advance (perhaps even at pre-natal or post-natal counselling) to ensure adequate planning.

Retention versus Recruitment

The diagram below charts the enrolment pattern for the group of students that began with French immersion in Grade 1 in 1992/93, through to the class that completed Grade 6 in 1997/98, and was then augmented with new recruits for Grade 7 in 1998/99. The diagram suggests a loss of nearly 1,000 students, or 30% of the original enrolment by the completion of Grade 6.



The implications of this enrolment pattern cannot be overstated. For one of three students who start an immersion program, the program fails to deliver the expected results. Assuming that there is one child per family in each grade, by the end of Grade 6, there are 1,000 families with a negative experience in French immersion speaking with their friends and neighbors about what they've learned.

This "negative marketing" is increasing and will continue to increase the costs associated with recruiting each additional student. By negatively impacting the psychological factors that affect the main decision makers, through the past experiences of their peers, past program performance significantly impacts future recruitment efforts. Because there are limited entry points, immersion programs depend on the commitment of the families in order

to maintain class sizes through each year of the program. First and foremost, therefore, the programs must show commitment to the students and families that are recruited, and must be ready to deliver the product promised and implied.

Marketing cannot be accomplished independent of the product. To be effective, administrators and teachers will have to work together to deliver a product that consistently meets or exceeds the expectations and values of the families recruited. Without this recognition, market share is not sustainable and recruitment efforts will become increasingly more expensive.

Conclusions

"Language education generally could be well positioned to take advantage of current perceptions regarding globalization and the implications that this has for education in Alberta. However, French immersion in Alberta appears to be failing a significant share of its existing market, while not capturing its appropriate share of enrolments each year. There appears to be a need for better customer communications and planning to ensure the success of the program in the future.

An effective plan for promoting a French immersion program will oblige school administrators to carefully consider each of the decision factors discussed in this paper. For example, the image of a French immersion program might be greatly enhanced if it were included in the plans for new school facilities in new or growing neighbourhoods. A proactive approach would be to lobby and work with local policy setters and even developers to ensure ease of access to immersion programs.

School districts might also consider working together, perhaps with support from companies with international operations, to affect the perceptions of potential customers through public forums and advertising. Individual schools should certainly consider the post secondary model of recruitment, accessing and informing the decision makers prior to the decision being made. For elementary schools, this means actively seeking out and communicating with parents or guardians of preschool children. For late immersion programs it means communicating with elementary school students and their parents or guardians.

Some commitment to marketing and to better meeting expectations will be required at each level (*school, region, and province*) to ensure a higher and more sustainable market share for French immersion. Each school and region should set specific market goals and take the necessary planning and implementation steps to ensure these goals are achieved. The future fate of language education in Alberta will depend on the actions taken now.

BACKGROUNDER

Program Promotion: Generating Interest and Involvement

Two jurisdictions (one urban/one rurban) were rewarded with significant growth in French immersion enrolment (up to 30%) after implementing a marketing plan. Using the attached planning matrix, each jurisdiction developed a plan to meet its unique needs. In this hands-on workshop, participants will learn about this planning model and apply it to a mock scenario to develop a marketing plan for a jurisdiction with lagging immersion enrolment.

An Example Of How It Works

Situation

Enrolment in the district's French immersion kindergarten program had dropped significantly. As kindergarten was the prime entry point for the district's French immersion program, a drop in enrolment was not a good portent for the health of the overall program.

Response

Concerned with the downward trend, the jurisdiction's French immersion coordinator—Pierrette Messier-Peet approached the communications coordinator Suzanne Lundrigan with the problem. The two worked with an already established French immersion steering committee, which included parents, teachers and administrators, to develop a plan aimed at increasing the registration in French immersion. With a broad spectrum of stakeholders represented on the committee, it served as a focus group for identifying target audiences; developing messages for those audiences and developing strategies to deliver those messages.

Outcomes

The committee developed a schedule of activities that ran throughout the year. Enrolment increased by approximately thirty per cent. Morale improved.

The Keys To Success

Research

At the outset, the committee devoted time to conducting a thorough and honest self-appraisal of the challenges that it faced. This examination of conscience helped the committee identify the two key strengths it would promote as well as the two key weaknesses it would

focus on improving. The committee did not spread itself too thin. This informal environmental scan guided decisions about where to focus resources.

Clearly articulated goal

The committee agreed to a clearly articulated achievable goal—something we could measure. Again the committee made sure not to bite off more than it could chew. We wanted to taste success; not feel that we'd fallen short of our goal.

A planned systematic approach

The team carefully planned every initiative and knew well ahead of time what piece of the puzzle should fall into place when; who would take care of getting it done and how we would evaluate our efforts. The publicity campaign crescendoed in the weeks before registration. Note: a lot of less glitzy hard work was done well in advance—booking an expert in French immersion learning for a parent evening; opening the classrooms so parents could have their child have a kindergarten experience, etc. Thanks to careful planning, promotional tools like brochures and posters were ready well ahead of time.

Recognizing that parents needed time to interact with teachers to feel comfortable about enrolling their children in the program, limited advertising dollars were focused on promoting opportunities for face to face communication, such as the test drive French immersion opportunity and the parent information evening.

Involvement of all involved early on

Teachers, parents and administrators became committed to turning the downward enrolment trend around because they recognized the deleterious effect it would have on the program, their jobs and the children's education. As a result the work was shared across the committee instead of being left to one or two individuals—this built a broad base of support for the initiative and meant the same messages were being delivered consistently.

Internal people understood and accepted the role they had to play

In fact, addressing the internal issues first was a key to the success of this initiative. When we moved to work with the public audience, everybody was well prepared and able to play their part.

A commitment to evaluation

Each activity was measured for its impact. How many people came to the parent information evening? How many tear-off information slips were removed from the posters? And of course, the ultimate evaluation—the number of students that registered in kindergarten.

Suzanne Lundrigan, Manager, Communication Services, Alberta School Boards Association, Edmonton
Pierrette Messier-Peet, Teacher, École Notre-Dame, Edmonton
Carmen Mykula, Second Language Facilitator, Parkland School Division, Stony Plain

Goal
Definition: No more than 30 words; Realistic, Measurable; Simple language
Example: Enrollment in our district will increase by 5 per cent.

OBJECTIVES	AUDIENCE	MESSAGE	STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINES	BUDGET	EVALUATION
By the end of June, our parents will be aware of our jurisdiction's successes and prepared to serve as active advocates for our program.	Parents with children in the system at key transition points: Kindergarten Grade 7 Grade 10	"Our district offers students academic success."	1. Develop list of parent advocates who could serve as references to new parents. Share stories of academic success with these parents. List them as references for the system.	Suzanne	Before the end of June	Time	How many calls did our advocates receive? Did they feel prepared? Feedback from new parents. Did "sales" occur as a result of this contact?
			2. Each school will have at least two academic success stories in the local media.	School representative	Before the end of June	Time	Is each school featured twice? Are the stories about academic success?
DEFINITIONS							
These are the milestones we have to hit to achieve our goal. **Criteria:** No more than four Set deadline Measurable Specific	This is whom we have to reach to achieve our objectives. **Criteria:** Choose audiences you can impact Be specific Define your audience thoroughly: - Size - Background - Attitude - Influence - Accessibility	This is what these audiences have to hear to act in the way we wish. **Criteria:** Keep them simple Motivational	How do we get this message to this audience? **Criteria:** Consider the audience Consider the content Capitalize on existing opportunities Explore all your options: - Face to face - Promotions - Publicity - Advertising	Who will take the lead? **Criteria:** Share the duties	When will strategies, tools are put into place. Track progress. **Criteria:** Be specific Be realistic	Money and people	How will we know that our efforts have succeeded? **Criteria:** Be specific Quantitative Qualitative Measure objective/strategy

SESSION NOTES

Program Promotion: Generating Interest and Involvement

Suzanne Lundrigan, Pierrette Messier Peet and Carmen Mykula

The following summary was prepared from notes taken during the session by a volunteer recorder, and from any other written records of the session as may have been kept on flip charts or work sheets. The summary was reviewed by the session presenters and printed with their agreement.

Communications Planning

St. Albert Protestant Separate School District saw a 38% increase in Kindergarten enrolment after the first year of the implementation of a communications plan. In Parkland County, Kindegarten and Grade 1 enrolments increased.

In order for a communications plan to work:

- listen to what your communities are saying
- ask tough questions
- be open to what you might hear
- realize communication is not a one time thing
- realize it is not a one person job
- start from a listening position
- involve representatives from across the whole system: administrators, parents, teachers, etc.

To gather information on communities contact Statistics Canada and Databook

Conduct a SWOT Analysis: identify *S*trengths, *W*eaknesses, *O*pportunities, *T*hreats

Identify audiences

Establish messages: simple, motivational, unique to audience.

Select tools: open houses, thank you notes, radio shows, etc. Do not use just written tools for reaching audiences.

Ask what success would look like when the objective is reached—how can it be quantified, qualified?

[Delegates were then presented with the following scenario from which to work in building a communications plan.]

Welcome to "C'est Beau School District". This will be your reality for this afternoon's workshop.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

- District serves 8000 students in mid-size city (50,000) and surrounding rural communities.
- Japanese-owned pulp and paper mill employs 65 per cent of people in city. Recent expansion - booming economy.
- Military base re-opened last year.
- Served by daily newspaper/three rural papers/two radio stations.
- Prosperous farmers surround the city.

THE FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM

- French Immersion offered for 14 years.
- Dual-track program -- offered in schools in the city. Bussing not an issue. Community school is equidistant to the F I programs.
- Two graduating classes so far (75 per cent of graduates attend university)
- Two FI graduates received 1998 U of A gold medals for top marks in Pharmacy and Arts
- Kindergarten enrolment dropping steadily over last five years --down two to three students each year. (16 students this year)
- Kindergarten/lower elementary teachers enjoy the smaller classes and question merit of publicizing too much. (18 to 21 students this year. Elementary teachers skip French Immersion meetings.
- Overall program maintains low profile -- There was only one article in the paper last year -- and that was about a drop in achievement test results.

  In fact this was the first time in five years the marks had been that low. Typically F I students scored well above provincial average, but no one had shared that information with the reporter.
- That one article has been damaging. People still calling district office asking why kids were doing so bad in French Immersion.
- Elementary program housed in district's newest school (dual-track program). Students have access to all the best technology.

PARENTS

- Very supportive and vocal. Committed to seeing their children bilingual
- Since the newspaper article about the marks wondering about University achievement - especially in Sciences.

TEACHERS

- Most teachers with the district for more than 10 years
- 65 per cent enrolled in Masters programs
- Very supportive of creating extracurricular French experiences for students:
  - Grade 6 students go to Falher
  - Grade 9 to Quebec
  - Grade 12 to France

DISTRICT CONTEXT

- Dollars are getting tighter Principals from other schools grumbling about small class sizes at French Immersion -- calling for grades to be mixed.

- English classrooms are jampacked as a result of recent influx of military families to the new base -- many from Quebec -- parents tend to place children in English program -- fear students won't learn English.

SCHOOL BOARD

- Previous board had been strong supporters.

- October 1998 elections brought three new faces to the five-member board table including one board member who had campaigned on having the district offer a Japanese program. She pointed out influx of 300 Japanese families (new mill employees)

- Board wants status report on French Immersion program by December 12.

THE SUPERINTENDENT

- Generally supportive of FI program. Authorized $5000 in advertising expenditures for last summer's Kindergarten campaign. Didn't work.

- Superintendent has allocated $10,000 for campaign this year but has indicated the board wanted a full accounting of what would be done with the funds -- and that there had better be results or else.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths in regards to scenario

- no competition
- growing community
- newest/modern school
- busing not a problem
- teachers supportive of creating extra curricular activities
- supportive parents
- $10,000 for campaign
- teachers upgrading
- good academic results (75% going to university)
- program established
- stable staff
- supportive superintendent
- small class sizes (seen by some as a strength and by others as a weakness)
- dual track (seen by some as a strength, by others as a weakness because of use of English)
- 65% of teachers enrolled in Masters program
- new board, 3 new out of 5 members (seen by some as a strength and by others as a weakness)

Weaknesses

- bad publicity, one bad article
- low profile with the press
- internal sabotage, teachers not attending meetings
- low enrolment
- principals complain of budgetary cuts
- split classes, not seen as positive
- dual track (seen by some as a strength and by others as a weakness)
- small classes (seen by some as a strength and by others as a weakness)
- Kindergarten enrolment low
- 65% of teachers in Masters program costly
- marks down in achievement tests
- military moving in
- new board, 3 new out of 5 members (seen by some as a strength and by others as a weakness)

Opportunities

- more native Francophones with military
- number of media opportunities
- status report to Board—there is interest in knowing what's going on
- supportive, vocal, strong parents
- $1000 from Board for a campaign
- booming economy
- successful grads
- small classes (can be negative also)
- high enrolment in English classes
- influx of Japanese families

Threats

- board wants status report by December 12
- one board member who wants immersion Japanese program
- 3 new board members (could go either way)
- dollars are getting tighter
- competition: small French immersion classes vs large English classes
- increasing need for English-as-a-second-language

This whole process deals a lot with perceptions

Four objectives were chosen (prioritized) from SWOT analysis by presenter:

1. Elementary teachers will understand the necessity of promoting the immersion program
   Audiences: teachers, principals
2. Japanese parents will be aware of French immersion program
   Audience: Japanese parents
   Key influence people/advocates (convince one, he then goes out to promote program):
   the employer or recruiter of Japanese parents
   real estate agents/welcome wagon
3. New military parents will be aware of French immersion program
   Audiences: communications officer
   military
   real estate agents
   CPF
   military parent on committee
   mothers (they usually make schooling decisions)
   day cares
4. Current parents will not be prepared to advocate on behalf of the program
   Audiences : positively committed parents, experienced parents

[Delegates then broke into groups to work on each objective. The following tables are samples of what delegates came up with.]

OBJECTIVE	AUDIENCE	MESSAGE	STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINES	BUDGET	EVALUATION
Elementary teachers will understand the necessity of prompting the immersion program		Promotion of the French immersion program benefits you (the teacher)	-meet with staff leaders -do enrolment projections -meet with the whole staff to share the facts or the problem of low enrolment -use professional development day to meet -involve staff in generating strategies for dealing with decline in enrolment and/or promotion ideas -have teachers develop individual team action plans		Nov. 30 professional development day	$0	-10% increase in number of staff showing up for future FI meetings -pre/post attitudinal survey of staff -teachers more positive about program around school
(A second group discussed the same objective)	Teachers Principals	Teachers are important to success; success won t happen by itself	-staff meetings -professional development days -one on ones -listen to them, get ideas -celebrate successes	Administration and informal leaders in the school	-monthly -one on ones to get ideas -professional developm t days -ongoing	$0, maybe some for professional development days	-more enrichment -teachers meetings -second one on one -lower attrition from Grade 1

OBJECTIVE	AUDIENCE	MESSAGE	STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINES	BUDGET	EVALUATION
Japanese parents will be aware of French immersion program	a. Japanese parents b. Employer/ recruiter c. Key influence	Student benefits of French immersion: high academic achievement, globally competitive, equal opportunities, challenging program. We will learn about the Japanese and they will learn about Canada through learning English and French	-web sites -face to face with CEO -using committed parents -multicultural night -brochure	-Superintendent with CEO -Parents to do multicultural night	-Web site before arrival of Japanese -upon arrival and according to needs	$1000.00 for brochures $2000.00 for welcoming	-enrol 20% of eligible students -positive feedback from company and CEO -Japanese families are involved

OBJECTIVE	AUDIENCE	MESSAGE	STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINES	BUDGET	EVALUATION
Current parents will be prepared to advocate an behalf of the program.	-positive parents -key influence parents -CPF	-you are very important and very capable -promoting French immersion benefits the entire school community -the advantages of the French immersion program	-newsletter -school council meetings -invite the group to the school -media article featuring the group of parents -flyer/brochure -open house where this parent group is present as a resource	-parents council every second issue -CPF -principal to put on agenda -parents, teachers, principal/ -administration/ teachers -parents/school staff -school	-every second issue -2 x per year -spring -late fall -February -spring	$0 $0 $20-50 $0 $2,000 $0	-did we meet the deadlines? -did we do this 2 x per year? -qualitative -upon registration: ask parents where they heard about program: newsletter, newspaper, flyer, etc. -guest book, questionnaire

Further comments by delegates

"Communications marketing should have happened 5 years or 10 years ago."

"Something has to be done in my district. We are not going to wait for the district. Our own school will do something. Facilitation resources will help."

"How cheap it is. It takes a lot of manpower and commitment, but not a lot of money."

"There used to be a government department that offered support for how to run a board meeting, how to facilitate, etc. We need a skilled facilitator to show us how."

"There should be specialized sessions at the ATA on this."

"Target the new teachers so that they have long-term good attitudes toward French immersion and lessen internal sabotage."

Effective communications isn't:

- A cover-up
- A panacea
- Just publicity
- A one-time event
- A one-person job

Establish goal

- No more than 30 words
- Clear simple language
- Realistic/achievable
- Measurable

Effective communications is:

- Planned
- Systematic
- Two-way
- Ongoing
- Consistent

First steps

- **Analysis**
  - Why were numbers dropping?
  - What was happening around us: (Local/ Provincial/National)
- **Research**
  - Statistics Canada
  - Databook
  - Economic development officers
  - Chambers of Commerce

Houston.....we have a problem

- Set up a committee
- School administrators
- Teachers
- Parents ***
- Central office staff

"If people are your customers you would do well to know what they want and what they think. Then, if you want to prosper, you'll give it to them."

SWOT analysis

- Strengths
- Weaknesses = Internal

- Opportunities
- Threats = External

Identify audiences

- Influence
- Size
- Attitude
- Background
- Accessibility

Set objectives

- Objectives have to be specific
- Objectives have to be measurable
- Set 4 objectives at the most
- Set a deadline

Establish messages

- Messages must be simple.
- Messages must be motivational.
- Messages will be unique to each audience.

Identify audiences

- Target your audiences: be specific.

- Choose audiences you can impact.
  (Grandparents impact enrolment decisions.
  Wealthy community = Snowbirds
  = How accessible in February?)

Choose strategies

- Advertising
- Publicity
- Face to face

Choose strategies

- What tool do we use to communicate this message to each audience?
  - Consider the audience
  - Consider the content
  - Remember existing tools
  - Explore all your options

Timelines and Budget

- Specify when each piece is to be complete
- Allocate your available dollars

Strategies

- Look beyond paper:
  - Face to face (ideal/expensive/time consuming)
  - Publicity (message out for free/loss of control)
  - Advertising (costs money/control message)

Evaluation

- Be specific
- Quantitative
- Qualitative
- Measure against objective
- Measure against the strategy

Who's responsible

- Build in systematic buy-in
- Share the load

"I sure wish I'd done a better job of communicating with GM people…there we were charging up the hill right on schedule, and I looked behind me and saw that many people were still at the bottom…"

[redacted]
CEO General Motors

Appendix G

- Demers, Daniel. **"A Changing Perspective: Meeting the Needs of All Students."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report.* Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000.
  Reprinted with permission.

- Mykula, Carmen, Anne Shillington, and Angèle Aubin. **"Learning Assistance Within French Immersion: The Experience of Two Districts."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report.*
  Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000.
  Reprinted with permission.

- Alberta Learning. ***Modèle d'intervention progressive conçue pour offrir des services éducatifs particuliers aux élèves ayant des besoins spéciaux.***
  Edmonton: Alberta Learning, 2000.

A Changing Perspective
Meeting the Needs of All Students

Daniel Demers
Principal, Glenayre School, Coquitlam SD, British Columbia

The following is an edited transcript of the presentation(s) and includes relevant overheads and handouts where available. This material has been reviewed and approved by presenter(s) for publication.

Good morning. My philosophy is very simple: no one in the world can do anything by themselves when it comes to dealing with children. Everything we do is collaboration, whether we do it directly or through non-human resources, we cannot just sit down by ourselves and look at the needs of students individually. It is not because we aren't intelligent or because we don't have knowledge, it is just that every child we deal with is different from another. Applying a formula across the board to any of our special needs students is just impossible. They are as different from each other as the non-disabled or the non-special needs students are.

The four questions I will address in this session are:

- Learning disabilities or learning difficulties: the theoretical differences?
- Do we modify the mandated curriculum or accommodate a classroom arrangement to help the child achieve the mandate?
- Who does it and how do we do it?
- Is this possible in French immersion or do we transfer the child?

I want to start with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. Each of us has one of those. Our zone of proximal development is the one in which we welcome information, process it and deal with it. But Vygotsky also says we have two other zones, one in which that kind of information is no longer triggering any kind of excitement or stimulus, and the other is which we are just frustrated. We try to teach and learn in the zone of proximal development. In a situation like this session or at the university or reading a book, the material to be learned will hit us in the zone where we are bored stiff, or in just the right spot where we are receptive, or it will be so frustrating that we cannot make the leap from where we are to where the material wants us to be.

In a teaching situation, we are dealing with groups, various individuals with various zones of proximal development. We have to be able to impart information, either adult to adult, or adult or child, or system to child by giving them the information that will hit that zone of proximal development. Whatever is said will hit some people right on target, will bore some and will frustrate those who are missing the links to make the leap to understanding.

Imagine having to provide programming for these three "classrooms" (please see Exhibit 1). All these people were, at one time or another, in a position of formal schooling. They have all accomplished a great deal within our society, and some will be remembered eternally. Yet all of them bring many different stresses in a classroom situation. They also bring different kinds of stress to their parents, who have to deal with them. I am the parent of two children with individual needs, one is gifted with LD, a motor skills problem, and one has a

THINK OF A CLASSROOM OR A SCHOOL WITH THE FOLLOWING LEARNERS:

MOZART EINSTEIN GALILEO LEONARDO DA VINCI JULES VERNE
ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSON THOMAS EDISON
RODIN THOMAS THOREAU LOUIS PASTEUR BEETHOVEN RODIN

HOW ABOUT A CLASSROOM INCLUDING:

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER DAVID H. MURDOCK
F. SCOTT FITZGERALD GEORGE C. SCOTT THE WRIGHT BROTHERS
AGATHA CHRISTIE GEN. GEORGE PATTON JOHN F. KENNEDY

IMAGINE DRAFTING AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR:

CHER HENRY WINKLER STEPHEN HAWKINGS WHOOPI GOLDBERG
PETE ROSE SYLVESTER STALLONE "MAGIC" JOHNSON CARL LEWIS
SUZANNE SUMERS ROBIN WILLIAMS JOHN LENNON

Exhibit 1 Classrooms with Famous People

dyslexic type of learning disability. Learning disabilities don't just come on at 9am and finish at 3 or 3:30. They stay right through the day. They don't end on June 25th either; they continue throughout the summer months. Those of you who deal with students with special needs, or have children with special needs, or yourselves are adults with special needs know that there is no on and off switch.

How do we look at the needs of all these people? We look at it by understanding where they come from.

Very rarely are we a pure anything. Often we are affected by the learning situation: the environment we are in, our mood, the day of the week, etc. We usually have two people dealing in an interaction. How do we accommodate for the two different learning styles? Both the teacher and the learner has a learning style. The teacher's usually translates into a teaching style. How do we make sure that marriage results in some kind of learning between the two people?

The question for us to ask is: what am I doing in the teaching or learning environments to provide for all the modalities when I am teaching? Being the touchy-feely kind of teacher when you are not that kind of person is really awkward. Being the dry lecturer—referring to theory, quoting research, giving names and dates, or even knowing the gender of the writers—if you are not so inclined is also hard. Being all things is impossible, but if you are flexible, then at one point or another during the learning situation you will reach students when it is a good time for them to learn.

I believe that, by nature, we continually try to acquire more information. If we have systems in place that will let us be the type of learner we are, we will stand a better chance of succeeding. Some people, however, are thrown out of learning situations simply because of their learning styles. For example, I am a doodler. If any of my professors had seen my

notebooks, I would have most likely been in big trouble, because I have drawings—hundreds and hundreds of drawings—where my notes should be. I successfully completed my courses, even completed a Masters degree, etc. Still, if you see that Annie is organized and has bullets and sub-groups, etc. and then you look at Daniel's doodles, you may make a judgement—depending on who you are as a teacher or professor—that is not accurate. Sometimes the way notes are taken is not a representation of what is actually going on for the learner.

Motivation always helps too. You all paid to come here, so you are motivated to learn at least one or two things before you go back. Some people came from very far just to get a feel for what is going on elsewhere. That is a key. The home environment is important here, too. Children don't live at school; they are in a triangulation between home, school and teachers. Think of what some children's home situation might be like. For some children, school is the only organized part of their life. When they go home, it is to chaos, or emotional problems, family problems. Even good families have problems. It is part of life. We can't, as teachers, just have these kids come in as names in our classrooms. They have way more to handle that just what goes on in the classroom. They can come into the class with no breakfast and fresh from a fight, or they can come in dealing with the fact that their dog died. We constantly have to think of our learners as more than just students in chairs. It is an invisible part of the formula, but we have to think about that. Each of you is now either disposed or indisposed to learning, based on what you brought in here today. In dealing with learning difficulties we have to remember that teachers, parents and students are all part of the formula.

What about learning disabilities versus learning problems? The differences are cloudy, and in most writings, not even addressed. The three principles of learning described by the BC ministry of education as a basic mission statement encapsulate, for me, what learning is all about:

- Learning requires the active participation of the student
- People learn in a variety of ways and at different rates
- Learning is both an individual and a group process

To describe the differences between potential and performance, understanding how school systems quantify the gap is important. An average IQ is commonly accepted as being between 90 and 110. However, a single IQ figure is not enough to quantify a gap, so psychometric tests, such as the WISC III or the Stanford Binet, provide a profile for each subject being tested. The profile usually provides subtest scores that can help the school-based team in understanding the candidate's relative strengths or problematic areas. These are not academic tests like B-level tests. These tests deal with subjective information and require the expertise of licenced psychometricians who have been trained to administer and provide an interpretation of the subjective data.

The sub-tests are divided into verbal tests and performance tests. This provides a clearer picture of all sort of things. Students who are above average or below average end up with fairly similar profiles, although obviously individually specific profiles. Then, depending on the province's specific guidelines, your numeric scores give you the label average, mildly intellectually deficient or severely intellectually deficient. It depends on how the numbers are defined in your province.

The typical profiles for a child with a learning disability are more erratic. They often have profiles with high highs and low lows, whereas above average, below average or average profiles usually have fairly even scores and profile graphics. This fits with the theoretical description of what we know about a learning disabled students—an average intellectual person with very low scores in certain areas and very high scores in others. We see it so vividly in our classrooms: the difference between what they can do and what they can produce, the difference between doing a cognitive task and doing two cognitive tasks.

Richard Lavoie, producer of a video series called "Fat City Workshop" illustrates the difference between cognitive and non-cognitive: Imagine that you are driving a car with a standard transmission on the highway. You are driving it so automatically that you shift without thinking though the music is loud and kids are playing and singing in the back seat. A snow storm begins. Suddenly you are no longer on automatic. You have to turn down the music, quieten the kids and drive very carefully and concentrate on the clutch and on your speed.

So you can have an activity that is associative, such as driving a car in normal circumstances. But you also have cognitive tasks, where you really have to concentrate and you can only do one cognitive task at a time. For some students, listening and writing notes is two cognitive tasks. They can't do both. For some kids, coming up with ideas and writing them down is two cognitive tasks, not an associative task. Many of those children, when you ask them about their weekend, will just begin a long rambling story that goes from one thing to the next and you are dizzy by the time they finish their story. For these children, word retrieval is so cognitive that they can't free themselves from it enough to turn it into an associative task.

One student, Robbie, had a graphic profile like a roller coaster ride: very high peaks and low valleys. We were clearly dealing with a very superior learner, somebody with potential, according to the numbers on his profile (IQ 136, 21/32 verbal score/performance score, 99 percentile/92 percentile and 98 percentile overall scores.) Robbie was someone we would expect to accomplish a great deal, because he had only two scores below the 100 and they are in the 80s. To quantify learners like Robbie better, though, we do a "potential" and a "performance" analysis, so we can get a picture of where they should be and where they actually are. We do this with the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement. From his K-TEA scores, clearly Robbie's academic performance was well below his potential. That translates to frustration. It is typical of what children with learning disabilities have to deal with daily. It is like the frustrated artist who has a great idea in his head, but can't put it on paper.

We are dealing with the difference between what these students can do in their heads and what they can produce. We must make sure we have a way to accommodate these learners and help them produce something closer to their potential. What we have to understand, though, is that there is usually not just one learning problem. This child, any child, is a complex learner with a huge repertoire of strategies and problems. Each situation in the classroom, each moment, requires a different grouping of abilities, problems, and environments. When we test children like this in Grade 2 or 3, we must remember that they have had three or four years of schooling to create their current level of frustration. Many students with learning disabilities have a great gift of being able to compensate for many of their learning problems. They are wise enough and smart enough to figure out how to do something to get the most success. They have already started their own interventions and their own re-education by the time they are in Kindergarten. How do we pick a particular starting point? I can't tell you in advance, but by

understanding him and his learning style I can hope to find someone on the teaching team, who can deal with or recommend interventions in each area.

Testing can help to identify a child who has learning disabilities and the child dealing with a learning problem. A learning problem usually creates a gap in learning of one to three years, depending on the problem. A typical child with a learning disability in an elementary school is delayed by two years. The longer we wait to intervene, the more complex the issue becomes. Behavioural changes make it harder to identify the original problem. The child may have given up, shut down, or turned into the class clown.

There are differences between students who have learning disabilities and learning problems or delays in their school work. A learning problem is much more an issue of range than is a learning disability. There are children who perform to expectations but who have surgery in February and miss two weeks of school. Suddenly they are behind in their math because they missed two math concepts. It is a linear time thing rather than a quantitative, processing issue. For these kids it is just a matter of catching up.

When should children be pulled out of the classroom for assistance and when should they be dealt with in the classroom? This is where your school-based team is important in addressing the needs of students so that they don't fall through the cracks and in determining how a particular student can be best helped. But how can we use the psychologist's reports or the psychologists, psychometricians, and other specialists as good resource people on our teams? (The specialists who are the most underused, particularly with children in immersion, are speech and language pathologists. They are key personnel in school-based-team intervention because of their abilities not only to evaluate articulation and physiological aspects of speech but also to work on language development—grammar, literacy, knowledge of vocabulary, etc.)

There is help out there. If you are unable to get a psychometrician to help you interpret the psychometric tests, there is a little cheat-sheet that could help school-based teams identify strengths or areas of concern for a child by looking at their sub-test scores (please see Exhibit 2). The top row shows the sub-tests. If the child has strengths—and we should remember always to look for strengths and not just weaknesses—often they can be used to overcome the weaknesses. I have used severely learning disabled kids as tutors in math because that was their strength. This increases their self-confidence and sense of success. Take the first four: Information, Similarities, Arithmetic, Vocabulary. If you have that as an area of weakness, it identifies long-term memory difficulty or verbal comprehension. It will affect these components of learning. The best thing to do is ask your psychometrician to help you understand what these things mean for the child in the classroom. Where will he be having problems and successes based on this profile?

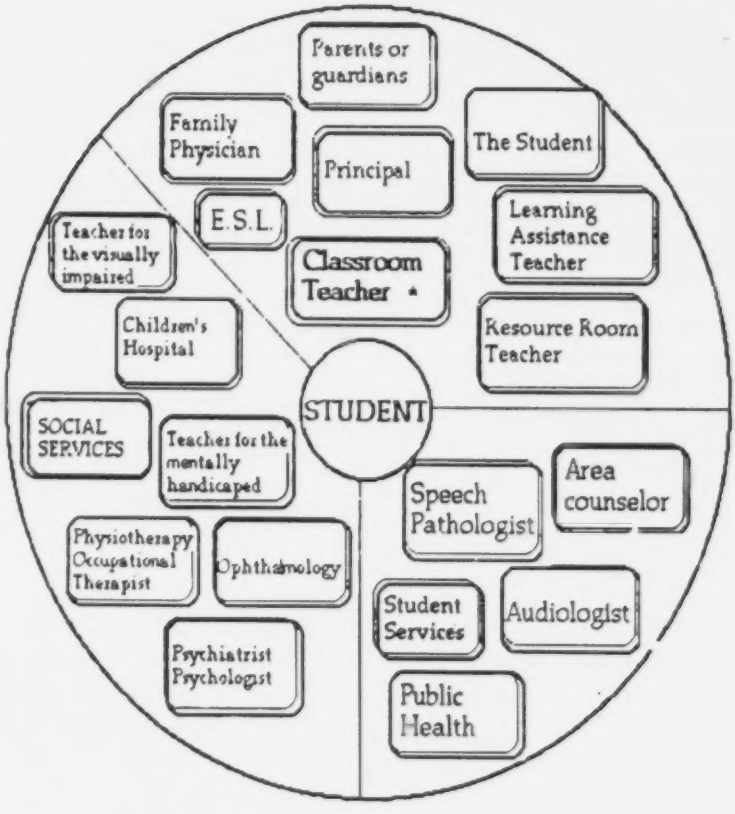
A good school-based team must be systematic and consistent. There must be rules understood by the entire school population—not only by the teachers, but by the whole support team at the school, district and community levels. It should also minimize the bureaucracy. This is where the role of the administrator is crucial. Looking at the School-Based Team Tracking Sheet (please see Exhibit 3), your team could look like this. It depends on whether you are in a large city or smaller district, where your support comes from. Some services have to be obtained from the nearest children's hospital.

Information	Similarities	Arithmetic	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Digit Span	Pic. Completion	Pic. Arrangement	Block Design	Object Assembly	Coding	Mazes
Long Term Memory	Long Term Memory	Long Term Memory	Long Term Memory			Long Term Memory					
		Short term Memory			Short term Memory					Short term Memory	
						Non-Verbal Reasoning	Non-Verbal Reasoning	Non-Verbal Reasoning	Non-Verbal Reasoning		Non-Verbal Reasoning
Verbal Comp.	Verbal Comp.		Verbal Comp.	Verbal Comp.							
		Working time/press				Working time/press	Working time/press	Working time/press	Working time/press	Working time/press	Working time/press
	Verbal Reasoning	Verbal Reasoning		Verbal Reasoning							
						Visual Memory				Visual Memory	
Verbal Comp.	Verbal Comp.		Verbal Comp.	Verbal Comp.							
					Sequencing		Sequencing			Sequencing	
						Perception Meaningful Stimuli	Perception Meaningful Stimuli		Perception Meaningful Stimuli		
								Perception Abstract Stimuli		Perception Abstract Stimuli	Perception Abstract Stimuli
		Freedom From Distractibility			Freedom From Distractibility					Freedom From Distractibility	
		Concentration			Concentration	Concentration					Concentration
								Perceptual Reproduction		Perceptual Reproduction	
								Visual Motor	Visual Motor	Visual Motor	Visual Motor
Information	**Similarities**	**Arithmetic**	**Vocabulary**	**Comprehension**	**Digit Span**	**Pic. Completion**	**Pic. Arrangment**	**Block Design**	**Object Assembly**	**Coding**	**Mazes**

Exhibit 2 WISC-R Subtests to guide interpretation and design interventions
Adapted from Grossman, 1995.

School-Based Team Tracking Sheet

STUDENT: _____ DIV.: _____
DATE: _____ DOB: _____
TEACHER: _____



From: THIS KID IS BROKEN; FIX-IT ! How to change that approach. Daniel Demers District 43 B.C.

Exhibit 3 School-based Team Tracking Sheet

BE SYSTEMATIC AND CONSISTENT

A good way to avoid students falling between the proverbial "cracks" is to establish a simple and systematic school-based team process. Decisions should be taken following a collaborative process involving all stakeholders, especially the learner.

STEP ONE

- Teachers', School's, Parents' or Student's observations of marked delays, "gap" between perceived potential and performance, certain level of frustration, changes/trauma, or inappropriate behaviors.

This step leads to: *1) initial conversations with the child and his or her family; 2) classroom Interventions and support using some accommodations & more systematic data collection; 3) informal discussions with the previous year's teacher(s) and a visit to the student's file is professional and will save time*. If problems persist, a formal request is made by the classroom teacher for a school-based team collaboration.

STEP TWO

- School-based team collaboration.
- Sharing of information and data collected as well as the results of initial interventions.
- Identify strengths and remember them when designing interventions.
- Make responsible assessment and evaluation decisions to quantify and qualify delays in order to begin interventions a.s.a.p.
- Decide if modifications or adaptations of learning outcomes from the curriculum are necessary.
- Set short timelines and always follow up.

This step usually provides short term interventions/support for the student, the teacher and the parents. It should involve all stake holders and provide realistic timelines to review and assess interventions. It usually qualifies and somewhat quantifies the "gap". Most importantly, it will provide guidance for the individualized interventions and support necessary for the student, teacher and parent team. Involve the student as much as possible and always inform the parents.

STEP THREE

- Assessment of the results of the interventions and accommodations put in place in Step Two with the school-based team.
- Identify any need for further modifications or adaptations to curriculum learning outcomes or program.
- Identify need for further assessment including full psychometric evaluation.
- Repeat steps One and Two with systematic support, review and evaluate.

1) Avoid trying to "fix" everything at once; 2) set small goals and review often; 3) always try to answer the question: *What should the child, teacher or parents do starting now?* 4) make assessment decision to assist the design of interventions rather than to label the learner; 5) involve the child as often as possible; remember to celebrate successes and to use strengths whenever possible to remediate content gaps.

Exhibit 4 Be Systematic and Consistent

I have divided the team into (starting at the top of the pie) school-based team members, then (moving clockwise) district-based team members and then community-based services. You will have more or fewer team members depending upon the child. Again, I go back to the beginning to remind you that there is no magic formula and each child needs to be dealt with differently. You cannot apply the same principle to each child and you cannot have the same team members for each child. That is not how the collaboration works. Success works by beginning with the school-based team—school counsellor, resource room teachers, classroom teachers and the learning assistance teacher. This team identifies the kind of learner they are dealing with and then brings in others.

I have included our school's team forms in your handouts. (Please see Attachment 1 at the end of this session.) Please feel free to use these in your schools and to adapt them. The primary responsibility for the child should always be the classroom teacher. The teacher is the front line and all should flow from and through that person. This does not mean that the classroom teacher does everything for the child or works alone.

We need to be systematic and consistent (please see Exhibit 4) in our approach.

Step one: teachers', schools', parents' or students' observation of marked delays, or a gap between perceived potential and performance, and so on. This is where we begin, by trying to understand the big picture, finding that something is going wrong. The student is not meeting expectations.

We hold initial conversations with the child and his or her family. Often that is all we need. We find out that some temporary situation at home, such as the dog dying, is the culprit. I have always encouraged my teachers to do rotating contact phone calls throughout the year. What they do is phone three families from their class roster each night, three or four times a year. They talk about good stuff, or pass on a funny story. That creates an "open door" atmosphere with parents and it also makes it easier to phone about a problem. Many parents don't come to meet-the-teacher nights and open houses, or can't free themselves during the day to be part of a field trip, so creating that contact is important. The phone calls help to create rapport and issues can often be diffused just by talking.

Step two is the school-based team collaboration: staff sharing information. Our staff come to school-based team meetings with their homework done. (Please see Attachment 1.) There is no sense in wasting time. Our school-based teams meet every Monday morning from 8am to 9:30am. We allow 15 minutes maximum per student. I have seen school-based teams fall apart because they don't have a system. At our school we come in, we share information, talk about it, and decide what to do when we leave the room. It has to be practical and lead to intervention; otherwise, it is useless. The team will vary depending on the child we are dealing with, but there will always be:

- a member of the administration,
- the resource room teacher (who deals with children with delays of two years or more and typically sees the students on a daily basis),
- the learning assistance teacher for the program (who typically works with students on a six-week process to help them catch up or deal with a specific, short-term problem),

A systematic approach to Special Education, Learning Disabilities & Learning Problems

When dealing with special needs students, a school-based team (SBT) has often the difficult and sometimes overwhelming task of designing an individualized education program (IEP) that will assist in the remediation of the difficulties and attempt to narrow the delays identified using interventions with the least amount of disruptions to the learner, his teacher or the rest of his classmates. Where to start? The following ten categories can help focus the SBT's initial discussions.

Preparedness
State of preparation to attend school, Physical and Behavioral development

Psycho-Motricity (Motor Skills)
a) Gross
b) Fine Motor-Skills
c) Self-image
d) Temporal and Spatial Orientation

Visual skills
a) Vision
b) Perception
c) Visual Memory
d) Visual Motor Skills

Auditory Skills
a) Perception - attention, source identification/discrimination, figurelground & integration
b) Auditory Memory and Sequential Memory
c) Auditory Classification

Reading
a) Sensory Input/Output
b) Perception - knowledge of conventions & symbols, figurelground in decoding
c) Memory - auditory & visual memory, auditory & visual sequencing & memory for association

Oral Skills
a) Automaticity - articulation, vocabulary access, speech fluency and diction b) Conceptualization **of** rules - structure and grammar

Written **Skills**
a) Motor skills in handwriting, penmanship and control - copy skills
b) Concepts of systematic thought
(Dictation, Note taking, Creativity in expression, Grammar structure
c) Spelling - mechanics, conceptualization based on roots, letter-sound relationship

Math
a) Concepts of mathematics
b) Memory vs concept understanding
c) Processes, applications and problem solving
d) Organizational skills and work appearance

Organizational skills
a) Classroom and routines
b) Homework and project
c) Time management & organization

Study Skills
a) Following directions
b) Recall of rules and processes
c) Meta-Cognition

A Changing Perspective Meeting the Needs of All Students, DEMERS, 1998

Exhibit 5 A Systematic Approach to Special Education, Learning Disabilities & Learning Problems

- the school counsellor, and
- a speech-language pathologist.

These are the key members of the team. Then, of course, we add the classroom teacher and the parent.

Reading the file before coming to the school-based team meetings and bringing the file is a prerequisite. Some teachers say they won't read the file, because they do not want to be biased. I would not want to go to, say, a doctor who did not read my file. There is amazing information in a student's file that can help with interventions. You learn about interventions already done that were successful and, even more important, that were not successful. I do not want to see the same kids brought up each year with the same problems. There should be constant follow-up and progress every year on the child.

Then there is the form that must be filled out and submitted before the school-based team meeting and given to the team manager (please see Attachment 1). The form forces teachers to focus on what they really want to look at. Is it behaviour, French, English, etc?

Step three: Make strategies systematic enough that you can narrow interventions down, break them into smaller pieces. Set smaller and shorter-term goals. We have children with complex profiles whom we can't repair all at once. We have to address things one at a time. If you can just address holding the student's attention for the next lesson, that can be a goal.

How do we involve the children in this process? When I was a classroom teacher, my first step was to sit down with the child and chat. Find out what they think is fun about the class, what is frustrating, etc. Often it is as simple as the child being afraid to be asked a question in class. So the teacher could develop an understanding with the child that he or she won't ask him a question out of the blue, but, say, only if he or she is standing right in front of the child's row. That way the child can be prepared, reducing his anxiety. Often the child will volunteer to answer questions later.

We must make ourselves available to the students. This goes for us in any role. You have to have an open-door policy so that the students know they can come to you. If you create that environment and the child feels comfortable bringing concerns to you, then you can deal with their learning concerns most easily. Nevertheless, students also need to know that we are not omnipotent.

Taking a systematic approach to special education, learning disabilities and learning problems (please see Exhibit 5)—

Preparedness is important when dealing with children in Kindergarten. We need to remember that a difference of a few months at this age can mean a huge developmental difference. At least 85% of our resource room students and learning assistance students have October or November or December birthdays. So a first question to ask is the date of birth. If a child has a consistent delay of a few months, then we just have to address that as that child's profile. But the child who begins with a one year delay and is then delayed by two years or even three years is a different problem. When considering the issue of having a child repeat a grade, consider the long-term impact. Having children stay with their chronological age groups is preferable for all kinds of social and psychological reasons.

Psycho-motricity. Here we are talking about fine and gross motor skills as they relate to calligraphy or catching balls and walking. Self-image and temporal and spatial orientation can be problematic at early grades and at puberty.

Visual skills. The difference between vision and perception is very important. We can all see things, but we may not perceive the message we are supposed to. Many children have problems reading and it is because while they read from left to right, they borrow from lines above and below. It is not a vision problem as in seeing distance, but it is a serious vision problem for reading. That can sometimes be solved by having students read with a ruler or a window cut from paper.

Auditory skills. Very similar to visual skills. There is a big difference between hearing and understanding. I can hear the white noise in this room and it has been driving me crazy since I arrived. For some children it would be deafening and would become a more important stimulus than the teacher's voice. Noises in the hall or of cars driving by may also distract. Some learners need quiet. This can sometimes be provided through using old headphones. A simple intervention.

Reading. We are talking about the difference between reading and all of the paraphernalia around reading such as muscular vision, memory, and so on. Also, understanding the conventions such as that we read left to right, that spaces between words mean something and that punctuation adds understanding.

Oral skills. We already talked about the difference between associative and cognitive speech.

Written skills. Math disability is very rare. Most of the math disabilities we see are language-based problems. True math discalculates are quite rare. I have only seen two cases in my career. Most problems are delays or just an issue of language. In French immersion we are wondering whether it is the French or the math. If the students can come to the language understanding, they can often do the math.

Organizational and study skills. Disorganization is one thing many learning disabled students have in common. Disorganization is more than just mess, it is about knowing something is there but not being able to find it. We often assume that students have study skills and know how to do homework; many do not. All students need to be taught time management and homework. Half my staff needs to be taught time management! It is not an obvious thing or something that we are born with. Some people need colour-coding, some need post-its, etc. Somehow we have to be sure the information gets filed away and is retrievable, when needed.

These skills are still developing in the student. For example, reading doesn't happen just in Grade 1, we learn it over the course of life. We cannot assume that learning these skills earlier will mean we learn them better. These skills are on a continuum. Like building a house, you can't build the first floor before the foundation. The problems we deal with in the classroom are akin to missing a floor. In intervention, going back to the beginning to find out where the child is and building from there is important.

I want to speak briefly about central auditory processing (CAP), and problems with perceiving sounds. Sounds can be heard but not processed in the core part of the brain. Audiologists will often diagnosis these children as having background deafness. But often when you have the child in a one-on-one situation, the problem is not there. It is always in a group situation that CAP problems will show themselves. CAP is an important element to consider when choosing between a pull-out program and classroom support. You should always provide what that child needs, not what the school can provide. This is another big job for administrators—to ensure that this happens.

Intervention.

All of what we have spoken about today is worth nothing if we aren't going to do something about it. The school-based team's job is to give the classroom teacher something to do with the child, as soon they leave the meeting. This can happen in a variety of ways, complex or simple. I have given you a couple of sheets that we often use for what we call our "quickies' (Academic/Behavioural Profiles, please see Attachment 1). We staple these to the inside panel of the classroom file. Identifying strengths and needs is one of the most important things to do. Going through this list and highlighting the child's strengths and areas of needs will serve to give the teacher a quick reference. The modification column provides a quick reference of strategies. If the child is having trouble with oral expression, for example, verbal rehearsal may be an important strategy.

I have also handed out some draft pages from a book I am working on called Accommodations, Accommodations, Accommodations (please see Attachment 2). (Because I am an administrator and work on this in my free time, it has been in progress since 1996. It will be outdated before it becomes anything.) The excerpt describes the systematic approach as well as ways to avoid reinventing the wheel. The book is divided into three sections: Accommodations for Teaching, Accommodations for Learning, and Accommodations for Testing. Each section has a general accommodations section which contains generalizations. Following sections go into specific areas of need. So if a child has a need such as "visual perception", you can find that on page three. Here you will find options such as modifying general instruction, instructional modifications for reading/literature, spelling/writing, mathematics, social studies and science. These are all strategies within the visual perception section that you could be using. In the boxes are the tricks I have learned or borrowed over the years. You will notice that there are some blank bullets. This is a working document and the blanks are intended for you to fill in with your own ideas and learnings. The important part here is to understand that sometimes we can make accommodations in the environment or with the material learners use in order to help them "learn" the concept. Accommodations should come from school-based team collaborations. They should be kept simple and notes on their success or failure should be recorded on the learner's file.

This is a wonderful tool for the school-based team. Use it to discuss the interventions that have already been tried (what worked and what didn't work) and ones that could be tried. Sometimes what doesn't work with a child is even more important that what does in helping determine the child's learning style. Keeping track of the strategies by highlighting each with a date and success code becomes very important when doing special education in junior and senior high school, because when a child has six or eight teachers there is no time to get together. A paper trail that avoids every teacher in the team having to reinvent the wheel is

useful. The department head can play a role here in making sure the paper trail is in place for the special needs learners. (The child's Individualized Program Plan is also a useful tool for this purpose. It helps to keep track of where the child is, where the child should be, why the child needs assistance, what assistance is needed and who will do what to narrow the gap—including the home.)

Now, what about the question of transferring students out of French immersion to obtain learning assistance? I know someone who is completely deaf in one ear and has 20% hearing in the other ear. Anyone would say he should not have tried French immersion. However, he was in French immersion, from K–12, and did fine. He was completely motivated and did a super job. There are others who have what seems like the perfect profile for French immersion who shouldn't be there because they don't want to be there. We cannot find an answer to who should or shouldn't be in French immersion. There is no blood test and no educational test either. You cannot predict success in French immersion, but you can be as informed as possible.

Availability of learning assistance services is a primary factor. The services available from province to province and school to school vary widely. It should be the first question a parent asks when considering French immersion. Some schools have the right attitudes, the right personnel, and the right services (in French and English.) Other schools don't have what is needed to meet special needs of immersion students and the students would have to be transferred. If we are going to invest in a program and have hundreds of thousands of students across the country enrolled in it, we have to have the support for it. This is a political question, not a pedagogical one.

A school can staff the French track with French speakers, the English track with English speakers, and the special education track with people who care about kids. If they are bilingual, that is a bonus. I have seen schools do a fabulous job of helping French immersion students through an English resource teacher. Our philosophy is that when we have a problem learner in our school, we have a team that will help—no matter the track or type of problem.

The guidelines that are in the attached article (please see Attachment 3, "Learning Disabilities and French Immersion") are NOT a test. They are to guide discussion between schools and parents before enrolling their children in kindergarten. It is a big decision It is not a decision to be made at the reception desk when you arrive at the school to enrol your child It is a very serious decision because it is different. It takes more than thirteen years for a French immersion student to become bilingual. You can't yank them out in the middle or compare them with students in the English track. The parent has to understand where their child stands in their development. If French immersion causes problems, it will be due to motivation, auditory processing or memory difficulties. We are talking about a very demanding program, which everyone can do, but perhaps some shouldn't. Some aren't ready in Grade 1, but might be ready in time for late immersion.

We have done very successful transfers to the English program and we have done some horrible ones. Most of the horrible ones have been transfers for the wrong reasons. They were for students who had learning problems. We told the parents the children would continue having these problems after they switched to English and they did. Only sometimes is the stress of French too much for a child and this must be identified individually.

Attachment 1

Glenayre Elementary School

SCHOOL BASED TEAM
COME TO THE MEETING FORM

STUDENT:_____ DATE:_____
TEACHER:_____ D.O.B.:_____
GRADE:_____

PARENTS CONTACTED: YES NO

GOAL AREA	SKILL LEVEL	COMMENTS
MOTOR SKILLS:	LOW HIGH	
Fine	1 2 3 4 5	
Gross	1 2 3 4 5	
READING:		
Word recognition	1 2 3 4 5	
Comprehension	1 2 3 4 5	
LANGUAGE:		
Oral	1 2 3 4 5	
Written	1 2 3 4 5	
Spelling	1 2 3 4 5	
Listening	1 2 3 4 5	
MATH:		
Computation	1 2 3 4 5	
Problem solving	1 2 3 4 5	
SOCIAL/ EMOTIONAL:		
Peers	1 2 3 4 5	
Adults	1 2 3 4 5	
Problem solving	1 2 3 4 5	
WORK HABITS:	P S G	

PLEASE BRING THE STUDENT'S FILE TO THE MEETING

GLENAYRE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PREREFERRAL
Please fill out and return to Darlene Proulx before the SBT meeting.

Date of prereferral: _____

STUDENT: _____

Grade _____ **Male:** _____ **Female:** _____ **Birthdate** _____
Year/month/day

Classroom teacher(s) _____

- **Teachers please read student's G4 file before the meeting**

Informal assessment has been done by _____

in (academic areas) _____ **date** _____

Psycho-educational assessment has been done **date** _____

and/or

Observations (classroom, gym, outside) done by _____
(related to behaviour difficulties) **date** _____

Consultation with previous teacher(s) ____, **administrator** ____ **or** _____

Interventions already tried: _____

_____

_____

_____

Parents have been contacted by phone _____ **in person** _____
regarding concern(s) in the following area(s):

academic	_____	**behavior**	_____	**speech/language**	_____
social	_____	**emotional**	_____	**medical**	_____
other	_____				

Reason for referral to SBT:

_____ **would like ideas/suggestions; problem-solve with SBT**
_____ **referral (for testing, counselling, S-L, beh. team, etc.)**
_____ **would like additional or change in support for the student**
_____ **other:**

Student's name: _____
Date: _____
Teacher: _____

Please highlight appropriate modifications or write in those being attempted

Strengths	Needs	ACADEMIC PROFILE	MODIFICATIONS
		Work habits	Homework book
		Work completion	Selective seating
		Organizational Skills	Photocopying
		Note taking	Buddy/Tutor
		Concentration	More frequent testing
		Attention span	Short and direct questions
		Memory	Positive reinforcement
		Frustration level	Modification: -extended time
		Test taking	-oral
		Exams	-adjust expectations
		Oral expression	Verb rehersal and role playing
		Written expression	More time, reduce volume
		Reading comprehension	Computer, editing skills
		Following directions: Oral	Repetition, clear and concise
		Following directions: Written	Shorter, summaries
		Spelling	Limited penalty
		Handwriting	Encourage keyborading
		Computation	Calculator
		Problem solving	Manipulatives
			Cooperative learning
			weekly report
			Daily report

Strengths	Needs	BEHAVIOURAL/EMOTIONAL PROFILE	MODIFICATIONS
		Responsible	Stress: positives/immediate
		Cooperative with adult	positive feedback
		Cooperative with peers	Peer tutoring clubs
		Participation	Draw out at discussions
		Activity level: - high	Selective seating/reduced external stimulus/structure routine
		Activity level: - low	Structure routine
		Distractible	Shorten assignments/imediate feedback/reduce stimuli
		Impuslive	Role playing.verbal rehearsal
		Eagar to please	
		Temper outbursts	Low key response/ignore
		Unduly anxious/tense	Encouragement/responsibility/ reassurance
		Sense of humor	
		Self-confidence	Positive reinforcement/praise
		Reasonable expectations	Provide success
		Attention seeking	Encouragement/teacher follow-up
		Requests help appropriately	Limit teacher intervention
			Counselling

Other:

_____
_____
_____
_____

PROGRAMMING ALTERNATIVES FOR REGULAR CLASSROOM

TEACHER_____
DATE_____

STUDENT'S NAME

CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION

Vary grouping
Large group instruction
Small group instruction
Individual instruction
Peer tutoring *
Independent self-instructional activities
Learning centres
Vary methods of instruction
Teacher-directed
Student-directed
Preferential seating
Unison or choral responding
Paired retelling
Cooperative learning approach

*with careful matching (average paired with marking low achievers)

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Vary graded systems
Homework
Tests
Class discussion
Special projects
Vary reinforcement systems
Praise
Notes sent home/office
Grades
Free time
Special activity
Progress charts
Tangibles
Vary rules
Differentiated for some students
Explicit/Implicit
Assign peer tutor
Schedule regular conference times
Structure
Clear, realistic expectations
Provide outlines of content
Provide key visuals for organization
Allow additional time for responding
Cueing - utilize both verbal and non-verbal cues

METHODS OF PRESENTATION

Vary content
Amount to be learned
Time to learn new information
Conceptual level
Cumulative reviewing
Review general structure
Advanced organizers
Previewing questions
Cues, mnemonic devices
Provide immediate feedback
Involve students actively
Vary type
Verbal-lecture, discussion
Written tests, worksheets
Demonstration
Audiovisuals
Tape recorders
Filmstrips
Movies
Projectors
Transparencies
Encouraging the use of organizers - calendar, homework book
Ask student to repeat instructions
Explain purpose and expectations of lesson

METHODS OF PRACTICE

Vary general structure
Amount to be practiced
Time for practice
Group/Individual
Teacher directed/independent
Items ranging from easy to difficult
Vary level of response
Copying
Recognition
Recall with cues
Recall without cues
Vary type of materials
Worksheets
Texts
Audiovisual equipment
Allow additional time to complete tasks
Reduce expectation for quantity of work
Encourage questions
Reinforce appropriate participation
Ignore inappropriate behaviour
Allow for use of photocopied notes
Calculator
Allow for dictated responses/notes
Taped books
Key visuals

METHODS OF TESTING

Vary type
Verbal
Written
Demonstration

Vary general structure
- Group/Individual
- Amount to be tested
- Time for completion

Vary level of recognition
- Recognition
- Recall with cues
- Recall

Allow for sample or practice test

Allow for testing in small group situation (Resource Room)

Allow for open book testing

Provide assistance by reading instructions and questions

Allow for modification when marking

(HIGHLIGHT APPROPRIATE MODIFICATIONS)

Attachment 2

Draft version 1.3. e-mail suggestions/comments to: demers@sfu.ca 1996©

ACCOMMODATIONS •TEACHING Alternatives
ACCOMMODATIONS •Facilitating LEARNING
ACCOMMODATIONS •Alternative TESTING

A handbook for Reasonable Classroom Interventions

Daniel D. Demers

The best way to ensure survival of both teachers and students dealing with special needs in the regular classroom, is through a consultative and systematic approach to intervention designs (IEP's). There are many reasonable accommodations and programming alternatives that can be put in place by classroom teachers within a regular classroom setting. This document proposes ways to modify home and classroom activities to achieve this goal.

The recommendations contained in this document are organized to create or support a systematic approach to dealing with learning disabilities and learning difficulties. Although it was designed especially with the regular classroom teachers in mind, it can also be used by resource room teachers, parents and students alike. Because the recommendations in the document are mainly process based, it can be also used with any language programs, such as French immersion or heritage language programs. The content of the document is based on the author's practical experience with intervention design in special education and regular classroom settings, and with years of school-based team collaboration.

Some of the ideas and strategies suggested in this document have been collected and adapted from various sources: from classroom practice, classroom teachers, district-based documents, school-based documents and, from books or commercial publications mentioned in the bibliography.

The document is organized in two parts: Part One provides suggestions for teaching, learning and testing alternatives for specific needs areas. These alternatives may easily be implemented by regular classroom teachers and their students. Recommendations are reasonable and quite simple to put into action. Part two of the document provides a glossary of intervention terminology used in Part One.

Part One is divided in three sections:

A: Teaching alternatives for the delivery of instruction. Within section A, accommodations and alternatives have been divided in five sub-categories. 1. **General accommodations**; 2. Accommodations for problems related to **visual perception**; 3: Alternatives used when designing instruction or interventions for learners with **auditory perception** problems; 4: When dealing with **fine motor skills** problems; and 5: Alternatives to deal with **organizational skills** difficulties.

All sub-categories of section A (except the first one, "General"), have been subdivided in academic subject areas such as Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Social Studies etc., in order to further facilitate the selection of alternatives for the classroom.

B: The second section of Part One, deals with 'learning' alternatives. How can students with learning disabilities or difficulties become more active participants in learning situations? This section is also divided in five sub-categories, general, written difficulties, oral/verbal difficulties, fine motor and organizational. It is important to involve the students as much as possible in the selection and the maintenance of the accommodations or interventions designs.

Finally, section **C**: Testing or evaluation alternatives, based on the same five areas of difficulties. This section provides regular classroom teachers with suggestions on how to modify formats or/and methods of testing and evaluating students' work. It guides teachers towards sound ways to evaluate learning outcomes rather than learners.

The alternatives and accommodations suggested in this document are in no way all inclusive. Following the philosophy of collaboration and consultation, blank spaces have been left in each section for the users to add their own modifications and suggestions. This document can be used as a resource member of the consultation team.

In Part Two of the document, a glossary of the terms used in Part One has been organized in alphabetical order to provide users (parents, students and teachers) with a short definition and some practical implications for each recommendations.

A. TEACHING: Alternatives in the DELIVERY OF INSTRUCTION

1. GENERAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Several accommodations will help most students with learning disabilities or with learning problems. These general modifications should structure an environment within which students can learn to become more autonomous and more successful in their everyday learning. It is how these accommodations and alternatives are used by students, teachers and parents that will lead to more autonomous learners, not the modifications themselves.

•Multisensory	•Frequent review	•Hands-On
•Highly structured	•Format modifications	•Use of clues / hints
•Sequential / metacognitive	•Seating	•Webs / diagrams
•Provide organizers	•Mnemonic devices	•Peer Tutoring
•Key concepts previews	•Make it real	•More time
•Planner/Homework book	•Private signals/prompt	•Positive reinforcement

2. VISUAL PERCEPTION DIFFICULTIES

Visual perception problems include visual (physiological), perceptual (discrimination, differentiation and integration) and visual memory difficulties. They can also include problems with gross and fine motor coordination, as well as spatial perception. Causes can be physiological, neurological or related to ADD/ADHD, motivation or developmental issues. The following instructional modifications will assist classroom teachers and school-based teams with the development of interventions (individualized educational programs, IEP's) designed to address the specific needs of individual learners.

General Instructional Modifications

•Provide a clear copy	•Proximity seating / teaching	•Verbal with visual
•Visual focussing aids	•Oral directions	•Buddy reader
•Peer note takers	•Summary / key points	•Taped info
•Reduce visual distractions	•Near vs far copying	•Worksheets
•Color coding	•Visual clues/flags	•Copy of lecture notes
•Clear / concise directions	•Study carrels/dividers	•Clear writing
•Compare to/w model	•Teach proofreading	•Highlighted texts
•TV or Video presentation	•Allow more time	•Multisensory

Instructional Modifications for Reading / Literature

•Highlighting	•Introduce new vocabulary	•Give purpose
•Pairs	•Comprehension group discussions	•Peer reading aloud
•Color code vowels /patterns	•Label objects	•Webs
•Metacognitive training	•ID multisyllables	•Common error chart
•Illustrations of vocabulary	•Discuss written responses	•Context
•Multisensory instruction	•Underline key words	•Taped materials
•Extra time	•Parallel/Alternate reading work	•Reduce Work
•	•	•

Instructional Modifications for Spelling and Writing

•Post common errors	•Personal misspelled word lists	•Journal
•Story dictation/scribe	•Discuss & post synonyms	•Learning partners
•Brainstorm words	•Spelling requests	•Spelling / reading
•Reduce volume	•Tape recorded responses	•Tutor/editor
•Frame outline	•Allow proof reading	•Teach in sequence
•No penalty for spelling format	•Adjust expectation/weight	•Give choice of
•	•	•

Instructional Modifications in Mathematics

•Verbalize steps	•Key words / vocabulary	•Computation aids
•Group operations	•Exchange worksheets	•Fraction circles
•Spacing size modifications	•Distinguish operations	•Manipulatives
•Reduce work	•Model computations	•Peer helper/aide
•	•	•

Instructional Modifications in Social Studies / Science

•More time / pauses	•Summarize & ask questions	•Review
•Adapt text (taped chapters)	•Controlled group work	•Multisensory
•Frame outline	•Teach to outlined framework	•Use agenda/planner
•	•	•

3. AUDITORY PERCEPTION DIFFICULTIES

Auditory perception problems include difficulties with: perception (attention, source discrimination, differentiation and integration), auditory memory (including auditory sequencing of sounds), auditory classification and auditory association. Causes can be physiological (ear infections, middle-ear problems, chronic allergies) or any physical problems with the hearing apparatus. The source can also be developmental or neurological, as in central auditory processing (CAP) problems. The following

modifications will provide hints for users about structuring the learning environment to assist learners with auditory perception problems in general, and across four curriculum areas.

General Instructional Modifications

•Preferred seating	•Short instructions/directions	•Speak more slowly
•Copy of notes	•Student repeats directions	•Circulate & assist
•Ensure student's attention	•Vary tone and pitch	•Quiet work area
•Key points on board	•Note taker	•Summarize with visuals
•Instruction clear/to the point	•Oral with written instructions	•Good handouts/outlines
•Teach listening skills	•Multisensory instruction	•Daily agenda checks
•	•	

Instructional Modifications in Reading / Literature

•Outline task / reading	•Provide listening center	•Visual / oral
•Stress visual phonic patterns	•Word families	•Good board skills
•Rimes & onsets	•	•

Instructional Modifications for Spelling and Writing

•Visual to print	•Group similar sound patterns	•Dictation
•Make personal dictionaries	•Limited or no penalty	•Choice of output
•Teach spell check programs	•Teach editing/proofreading skills	•More time
•Rimes & onsets	•	•

Instructional Modification in Mathematics

•Visual clues	•Example on sheets or board	•Flash cards
•Metacognition	•Manipulatives & symbols	•
•Steps for problem solving	•	•

Instructional Modifications in Social Studies & Science

•Worksheet guide for films & video	•Integrate skills training
•Audio-visual for introduction and summary	•Repeat directions
•	•

4. FINE MOTOR SKILLS DIFFICULTIES

Fine motor skills problems include coordination (eye-hand, thought-hand, calligraphy and tying shoelaces-type activities). Problems related to fine motor also include temporal orientation and spatial orientation, which can affect cognition and finished products. The range

of severity varies from mild to severe. Causes of the problems can be developmental or neurological (synaptic connections). This section discusses modifications and accommodations often required when learners have to deal with fine motor skills problems. It is important to note that these problems are not usually corrected by extra practice of the fine motor activity.

General Instructional Modifications

•Provide handwriting model	•Adjust expectations	•Paper placement
•Teach erasing	•Reduce copying activities	•Writing materials
•Spacing of letters	•Note taking	•Word processing
•Provide coach/tutor	•Allow extra time	•Allow choice for output
•Keep pencils sharp & long	•Sticky desk surface	•Writing pads not sheets
•Pens & Pencils with larger diameter		

Instructional Modifications in Reading / Literature

•Word banks	•Manipulatives	•Peer helper
•Provide large print	•Reduce words on page	

Instructional Modifications for Spelling and Writing

•Provide purpose	•Talk through letter formation	•Tracing
•Skip lines	•Transition from print to cursive	•Color baseline
•Charts of letter formation	•Start and end points	•Directional cues
•Large motor writing activities	•Limited or no penalty	•Scribe/computer

Instructional Modifications in Mathematics

•Graph paper	•Vertically lined paper	•Calculator
•Modified expectations	•Keep pencil sharp	•Scribe

Social Studies & Science

•Modify map/chart work	•Permit word processing	•Controlled group work
•Scribe for lab reports	•Oral reports	•Core sections to complete

5. ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS

Organizational skills deficiency is one of the most common problem affecting students with learning disabilities. Organizational problems may include: Problems in the area of time management, active reading, note taking and memorizing. Training in organizational skills is of great value to any student; it is of crucial importance to the survival of learning disabled learners. The following suggestions for modifications will provide guidance for teachers about structuring the environment of the learners with organizational difficulties in general, and across four curriculum areas. Study skills and time management programs can be purchased commercially, programs such as Skills for School Success (Archer & Gleason, 1990). It is important that organizational issues be taught and maintained systematically within curriculum content. Teaching these skills in isolation may not lead to the desired generalization of the skills across situations. It is important to review skills regularly when teaching and when giving feedback.

General Instructional Modifications

•Routines	•Clear work areas	•Time to organize
•Homework book	•Short & clear directives	•Color coded subjects
•Dividers	•Reviews and summaries	•Workbook, 1 pg at a time
•Teach organization	•Choices from few to many	•Metacognition
•Cue to inferential thinking	•Uncluttered worksheets	•List steps for assignments
•Lists of required materials	•Block worksheets	•Visual of clock for due time
•Mnemonics	•Teach acronyms	•Teach self-monitoring
•Review daily	•Note taking webs/outlines	•Parental involvement
•Time frame calendar for long assignments		•Clearly explain changes in routine
•From factual to abstract questions		•Assignments posted in routine place
•Metacognition training	•	•
•Time for students to clear/tidy work area		•

Instructional Modifications for Reading / Literature

•Purpose for reading clear	•Metacognition	•Study guide
•Teach warm-up of chapter/text		• Teach skim & scan
•SQ4R (read,recite,review,reflect)		• RCRC (see mnemonics)
•Teach note taking formats (main idea/details, idea diagram, webs, maps)		
•Mnemonics (memory traps, acronyms, chaining, visualization, Pindar's trick, flashcards, ROOSTERS strategy)		
•	•	•

Instructional Modifications for Spelling & Writing

•Preview activities	•Use sequence with comics	•Guide for structured writing
•Story starters	•Group stories	•Structure for reports
•Include question in answer	•Use margins	•Number answer sheets
•Teach topic, detail & closing sentences		•Teach transition words
•Paragraphs (cause & effect, definition, contrasting, expository, narrative, descriptive)		
•Teach steps of writing process (pre-writing, draft, edit, proofread, publish)		
•Metacognition	•	•

Instructional Modifications for Mathematics

•Easy to hard	•Practice	•Provide feedback often
•Ensure basic skills are automatic (if not use table/calculator)		•Use graph paper
•Model, showing steps	•Colour code formula	•Colour code worksheet
•Metacognition	•Use formula sheet	•
•	•	•

Instructional Modifications for Social Studies & Science

•Study guide questions	•Divide page for note taking	
•Use abbreviations	•Preview (warm-up) text for lecture	
•Review regularly	•Note key points	
•Recall new information	•Use multi-sensory methods (audio-visuals, food, objects)	
•Metacognition	•Use Outlines	•Colour Code
•Webs and charts	•Make it real	•Positive reinforcement
•	•	•

B. LEARNING: Alternatives to facilitate STUDENT PERFORMANCE

In many cases, simple alternatives can be put in place to assist student learning. The gift of time is often the best programming alternative a teacher or a parent can provide. The following section provides other reasonable accommodations.

General Accommodations

•Additional support	•Buddy system	•Peer tutors
•Volunteers / aides	•Cooperative learning	•Instructional games
•Self-checking lists	•Chart progress	•Use mistakes to teach
•Allow explanation of work	•More time	•Multi-modal response
•Effective questioning	•Scaffolded questioning	•Metacognition
•	•	•

Accommodations for Difficulties with Written Expression Problems

•Allow more time	•Use of short answers	•Stress accuracy
•Class time to work	•Specific feedback	•Regular feedback
•Journals	•Check with a model	•Answer fewer questions
•Modify original task	•Proofread	•Skip lines in drafts
•Oral reports	•Proofread draft	•Response cards
•Tape record answers	•Pictures with written work	•Reduce requirements
•Metacognition	•Ask for help	•Make a plan

Accommodations for Difficulties with Verbal Expression Problems

•Extra time	•Hints	•Rate oral reports
•Projects	•Notes with oral reports	•Visual with oral reports
•Read silently then orally	•Small group discussion	•Written instead of verbal
•Response cards	•Specific questions	•Tape oral reports
•Ask for help	•Allow for practice run	•Allow extra time

Accommodations for Difficulties with Fine Motor Skills

•Keep pencils long & sharp	•Ask for help	•Use models provided
•Use pens & pencils with larger diameter		•Use word processor
•Use rubber mat to stabilize paper	•Use word banks	•Ask for copies
•Ask for alternative output format	•Use graph paper	•Allow for extra time

Accommodations for Difficulties with Organizational Skills

•Use learning strategies	•Use mnemonics	•Keep lists
•Maintain daily planner	•Learn note taking skills	•Ask for help/support
•Establish realistic timelines	•Plan with a friend/coach	•Establish routines
•Review within 24 hours	•Rewrite notes	•Use "To Do" lists
•Organize colour coded system	•Plan ahead	•Do chapter warm-up
•Read aloud	•Write question in answer	

C. TESTING: Alternatives in measuring STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Special considerations for assessment are presented in this section. It is important to provide students with testing situations that will sample their learning, not their test taking abilities. Stress and processing difficulties can seriously affect the outcome of certain tests. To be fair means providing individual students with what they need, not, giving all

students the same thing. Feedback to students must be summative and formative.

General

•No distraction seating	•Key words	•Possible questions
•Frequent quizzes	•Read test to student	•Special seating
•Credit participation	•Small group testing	•Reduce anxiety
•Avoid "pop" quizzes	•Survey test	•Untimed tests
•Partial credit	•Test objectives	•No surprises
•Open book	•Test same as teaching method	•Short tests
•Check samples	•Teach skills for success	•Inform time allotted
•Aides to read and explain questions (not answers)		•Demonstration

Test Modifications Addressing Difficulties with Written Expression

•Tests with less writing	•Write on test	•Accept print or cursive
•Allow word processing	•Alternative response mode	•Allow webs/diagrams
•Grade content vs mechanics	•Allow scriber	•Outline vs paragraph form
•Manipulatives & pictures	•Oral exams	•More time
•Vary level of recognition (recall with clues)		•Limited or no penalty
•Test format same as teaching format		•Reduce volume/expectation

Test Modifications Addressing Difficulties with Verbal Expression

•Drawings with verbal response	•More time	•Tape recorded answers
•Oral answers in different setting	•Allow alternative/parallel response mode	

Test Modifications Addressing Difficulties with Fine Motor Skills

•Allow scriber	•Ensure pencils are long & sharp	
•Clear test format	•Post prompts or models	•Clear desk surface
•Have eraser available	•Reduce writing	•Give directional clues
•Allow alternative output format	•Provide Graph paper	•Allow adequate time

Test Modifications Addressing Difficulties with Organizational Skills

•Clear desk area	•Write acronyms out	•Set timelines
•Colour code test sections	•Read through test first	•Easy to hard
•Advise remaining time	•Establish test routines	•No surprise tests
•Review memory tricks before test	•Ensure supplies are available	•Establish sequence
•Test in same format as taught	•Give time to organize	•Clear test format

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Attachment 3

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Manitoba French-Language Students do Well in Cross-Canada Math Tests

Learning Disabilities and French Immersion: When to Transfer; When not to Transfer?

By: Daniel Demers

We all wish for the magic formula or test that would provide us with an objective answer to the question of potential success in the French Immersion program. The fact remains that each and every case has to be evaluated individually. Although this evaluation can be quite subjective, there is a systematic way to look at available information and make an informed decision on the subject.

To start with, look at the child from a subjective perspective and go through a checklist of what I have found to characterize successful and unsuccessful students in French Immersion. By going down this list I can come up with a profile that can quite accurately predict how well the child will succeed in this fairly demanding program. However, this by itself does not mean that a change of placement will give the desired results. *(see list on page four).*

Any decision to change the placement of a child must be in the interest of the child, not of the program, the parents or the teachers.

It is important when making a decision to remember that in many cases, a transfer to the native language program will not lead to the elimination of the learning frustrations. Furthermore, it may have negative effects on an already fragile self-image. Our objective is to strive to service all students in the second language. We must, however, remember that in some cases, however few, a transfer to the English program would be beneficial and would reduce some of the debilitating frustrations felt by some leaders. The question here is who do we transfer, why and when? *(con't page 4)*

Dispelling the Myth...

In 1993, a test was formulated under the guidance of the Council of Ministers of Education to measure the Mathematic skills of Canadian students and determine their preparedness for a global economy and life-long learning. Each province verified that the test provided a good match with its curriculum objectives.

Skills tested were in content (numbers, operations, algebra and functions, measurement and geometry, data and statistics) and problem-solving strategies. Each skill was tested at five different levels.

The results: overall, Canadian students had a disappointing level of Math skills. However, those tested in French showed a higher skill level than those tested in English. In Manitoba, French Immersion students made up 77% of the 13-year olds and 73% of the 16-year-old French-speaking students tested. The French second-language students performed at a higher level than their peers in the English program. Their results were higher than the national average in both content and problem-solving.

Why is this? Could it be that the teachers are doing a more thorough job of teaching math in French, or is it a question of focus? When children are learning Math in French do they pay more attention to the meaning of the words and thus are better able to interpret the questions?

One point is clear: the myth that anglophone children cannot learn Math concepts in their second language has been dispelled. If they are given good quality French immersion programs, the children's math skills are likely to be as good or better than in an English-language program.

Our responsiblity as parents is clear: to keep encouraging the schools to provide good quality programming in all subjects in French, including Math and Sciences.

Characteristics of Second Language Learning

First of all, we must identify the characteristics of the second language acquisition, to understand and appreciate the difficulties this learner must face and overcome. This information can then be used to modify existing programs, design measuring tools that will identify, evaluate and assist in the early detection of the difficulties and develop the appropriate remediation programs to assist students. Language acquisition is an ongoing process, and usually imply life-long refinements. Focus on the learner, anticipate deficiencies and promote meta-cognitive process of acquisition and memory organization for a more efficient recall of stored knowledge.

Although it is assumed that there are underlying deficient skills in students with learning disabilities, we must use caution in the testing of this population. One thing is certain, the protocol for evaluation of a learning disabled child in the French Immersion program will differ from the evaluation of the regular program students or the francophone students. No one appears to have the magic answer as to what tool to use. Each and every case warrants a different protocol of evaluation. The wrong diagnosis will lead to inefficient remedial methods and become only a waste of precious time for both the teacher and the student. It remains that, to accurately test the French Immersion students, we need more research specific to the assessment of that bilingual population. Valid and reliable assessment would need to account for the relative importance and possible interactions of cognitive and linguistic variables across language. It would also need to include developmental aspects of age related variables. Since none of the French only tests or the English only tests seem to reliably inform us of the deficiencies of the immersion students over time (Lapkin, 1984) we must be careful not to label a child with the inappropriate measure.

Some delays are expected in French Immersion programs, particularly in areas such as English spelling. However, researchers such as Genesse (1979) believe that the gap is narrowed by grade 5 or 6. These delays show in the testing as deficiencies, not as delays. When a model of evaluation becomes available, it will become much easier to set remedial instruction objectives and easier to attain them. Meanwhile, *strategy teaching* can alleviate some of the difficulties experienced by learners in the French Immersion program.

Who Should Transfer?

Are there certain students that would benefit from a transfer to the regular English programs? The answer to this question is certainly **yes**. But who? When? And who decides? Sometimes, the answer is **no**! Now the BIG question: which ones should remain and which ones should be transferred? The preceding information has provided us with the profile of a learner that would experience incredible stress in French immersion: an auditorily deficient student.

Prior to making such an important (and usually irreversible) decision, one must evaluate many facets of a child's profile. A good indicator of potential success of a child in second language acquisition has always been the level of **competence in the child's native language** (L1). The acquisition of a second language (L2) is facilitated by the systems established when language was originally developed by the learner in L1. These skills are then used to transfer and make generalizations in L2 acquisition and language development in general. If L1 is weak to start with, the acquisition of L2 will be affected in so far as building on a weak base leads to a shaky structure. This further highlights the importance of parental involvement in pre-school activities such as interactive reading and natural oral correction in the child's first language.

A second measure, one often overlooked by the schools and the parents of LD children, is the actual **level of frustration** that a student exhibits in his or her learning environment. An unmotivated child is often a frustrated learner.

Then, there is the decision to transfer a child, based on the belief that he or she will do better in the alternative

The successful student in French Immersion	The unsuccessful student in French Immersion
• is verbal, likes to talk	• is often a reluctant speaker
• imitates easily	• imitates with difficulty
• self-corrects	• doesn't notice errors
• experiments without fear of making mistakes	• often fears making mistakes
• is exposed to many models of good modeling (at home, in the community and in school)	• poor modeling environment (at home,in the community and in school)
• readily accepts challenges	• has a defeatist attitude
• shows strengths in first language	• often has poor first language skills
• trusts	• mistrusts
• is usually attentive and focussed	• often is inattentive and unfocussed
• is willing	• is often unwilling
• has good auditory discrimination	• has poor auditory discrimination
• has good memory and good meta-cognitive awareness	• has poor memory and poor meta-cognitive awareness
• has determined parental support and convinced parents	• often has unconvinced parents, and unprepared or unwilling to help

program. This can prove to be a grave error. I have often seen the learning disabled child perform no better in the English program even after going through the trauma and personal embarrassment of the transfer.

Profile of the Frustrated Learner

There seems to be **a student with a particular profile** that tends to do poorly in French Immersion. This learner tends to be less frustrated after a transfer in the English program. It is therefore important to discuss this learner before making a final decision.

Strengths or weaknesses in certain abilities can be good predictors to identify potential stresses or facilities to be encountered in the acquisition of a second language. When the difficulties have been identified as being mainly in the 'performance' tests, we find that the students with these profiles usually show no major improvements when transferred into the English Program if their school has a French learning remedial center. It is believed that students with a test profile showing verbal strengths, in areas such as short term memory, reasoning and auditory skills, and showing lower scaled scores on other measures such as visual comprehension, perception and other visual and performance focus, can usually work successfully in a modified French Immersion program with remediation sessions, in either a pull-out or in-class support service with an individualized educational program (IEP). Our candidate for transfer to the English program is a student with low scores in the area of verbal and auditory sub-tests of psycho-metric measures. Although this is certainly no magic test, it appears to reduce the inappropriate transfer and gives some of our less gifted learners a chance to achieve functional bilingualism. This method applies mainly to schools that provide learning assistance services (*l'orthopédagogie*) in French and in English. **Without the proper support services, the learning disabled student will be unable to remediate and circumvent some of his learning disabilities.**

In conclusion, there appears to be three main indicators, to look at, or evaluate, before transferring or enrolling a student with learning disabilities in or out of a French Immersion program. **First**, a subjective review of the successful and non successful characteristics list, with the goal, amongst others, of establishing the level of success the student has achieved in his or her own native language. **Secondly**, the personal dedication and motivation of the student, not the parents, to be in, or to remain in the program. **Finally**, certain students with learning disabilities can still be successful in the French Immersion Program, without undue frustrations, if their learning disabilities fit a certain profile. This profile puts their learning disabilities, or their poor scores on testing mainly in the area of non verbal and non auditory sub-tests. Testing for auditory discrimination is critical in second language assessments. We can only imagine the stress one would experience when dealing with a program that relies, almost exclusively, for the first few years, on oral communication, sound discrimination and sound production when the child experiences auditory dysfunction.

Importance of Learning Style and Self-Image

Finally, we must remember that the remediation of learning disabled students must include *the teaching of coping strategies and skills* that they will need to deal with their learning disabilities and the unusual way they have to learn and memorize language concepts. We all know, learning disabilities don't go away, but when the appropriate training or re-education is done, many learning disabled students can circumvent their problems, by using alternative learning strategies. One more important thing to remember, is their memory and recall difficulties. It varies greatly from child to child, from mild recall impairment to severe deficiencies. This issue must be addressed in the design of each and every individualized educational program. If our goal is to keep the students in the program, we must create remediation programs that address the learning process using curricula as a means to an end, not an end in itself. Chances are that if we create success for them, they will remain in the programs.

The most important issue is, of course, *the self-image of the child*. This must be addressed to ensure good motivation levels, and constant effort from the learner. It is also important to discuss, in realistic terms, the actual concept of learning disabilities with the students. We should also educate the students and the teachers of our schools about learning disabilities and the learning disabled learner. I have seen the sigh of relief of so many students when they find out that having a learning disability does not mean they are stupid, thus clearing the way for successful remediation. Self-evaluations and close scrutiny of individuals can often uncover underlying strengths, which in turn can be used to great advantage. These strengths have a two-fold advantage, they perform great magic in building self-image, and, the strengths can often be used to deal with some of the weaknesses.

We often believe that all our students should be performing at the same level. This belief is certainly not limited to the French Immersion classes. Let's carefully consider the learner before making far-reaching decisions.

"Imagine how quiet the forest would be if only the best birds sang".

About the Author:

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Note from the Editor: The above article is a summary of an original 6000 word article. The complete original article plus bibliography can be obtained from Canadian Parents for French (MB) 222-6551 or the Learning Disabilities Association of Manitoba (LDAM) 774-1821.

Learning Assistance Within French Immersion
The Experience of Two Districts

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The following is an edited transcript of the presentation(s) and includes relevant overheads and handouts where available. This material has been reviewed and approved by presenter(s) for publication.

Back in the 80s, when there was a lot of money, we had a resource room teacher at Queen Street. How wonderful that was for our staff and our students who needed the extra assistance. She was full-time and she would take the students on a pull-out basis. We called this Management by Specialist. There were lots of advantages to that approach: the problem was out of the classroom, the classroom teacher knew that student was being looked after, the pressure was off the classroom teacher, the classroom teacher didn't have to worry about how the student was receiving the extra help. The limitation, though, was that it was hard for the classroom teacher to bring the student back and make the student fit in where she should be with the rest of her peers. We also saw that it was hard on the students because they felt, "Oh man, why am I being pulled out." And sometimes they didn't want to go because they felt they were being pulled out of the classroom because there was something wrong with them.

But with the budget cutbacks, the money just wasn't there anymore. So we wondered what to do. We thought that we would just relocate these students to the English program. That's where they should be, right? They can't remain in the French immersion program if they have learning difficulties so we'll relocate them. So for our purposes today we're calling that solution Management by Relocation. But management by relocation didn't work. Sending them to the English program didn't fix their problems. They still had those same difficulties.

So now we have a dilemma. We have no money, so we can't get that specialist back, and we still have the French immersion philosophy that says we need to provide immersion instruction to all our students. So we need to do something different.

At Queen Street we were struggling for a name for what we do now. We did Management by Specialist; we tried Management by Relocation. What we are doing now we would call Management by Creative Teamwork (MCT). Our MCT process at the school is made up of four

MCT

REFERRAL COUNCIL

- is a school-based team approach
- considers student strengths/ difficulties
- results in an action plan

steps: the Referral Council, Assessment, Program Planning and Implementation, and Evaluation and Monitoring.

The first step is something that at our school we call "Referral Council". It's called a lot of different things in many different districts. But referral council is basically the foundation, the cornerstone of our process. It's a school-based, team approach to dealing with student difficulties.

We set aside an hour after school one day a week to deal with student referrals based on the student referral form (please see Attachment A). The form is a simple two pager, which is as stress-free for the teachers as we could make it, so they didn't have to do a lot of writing. It covers the common difficulties and common strengths of children that tend to be referred, lists their observations, what has been tried so far, what has been successful, and most importantly, the question the teacher wants answered by the end of the meeting.

We try not to meet for more than 15 or 20 minutes on any child. Generally the referring teacher, the principal, sometimes the assistant, the school counsellor and any other staff member who has a lot of contact with that child will be at the meeting. We just brainstorm about the child. We look at the file, we talk about strengths and difficulties. But the key is that before we leave we want to make sure that we have an action plan in place. Just a simple action plan of what are we going to try. It's not going to be exhaustive; it's just our first steps. What are we going to do? Who is going to do it? By when? And usually we try to put a review date. When we are going to get together again? More often than not, step one of the action plan is to meet with the family to chat about what needs to happen next.

Now to bring our process to life for you a little bit, we've chosen to illustrate the different steps in our program by using a case study: a student at our school this year.

MCT

ASSESSMENT

- Counsellor (in both languages of instruction)
- Speech Therapist
- Reading Specialist

This particular child is now in Grade 4. When she was in Grade 2, we began noticing that this child was stressed, was anxious. By the end of Grade 2 she had difficulty reading. She couldn't read *Le* and *Je* and those little kinds of words that she should be reading by then. She felt sick, she didn't want to come to school. By mid-Grade 3 we're really concerned. So we meet with the parents. They've noticed these things, of course, at home. We tell them we would like to assess her.

More often than not assessment is the second step in the process. Assessment could mean a lot of different things. It could be informal classroom observation. It could be a bit more formal type of assessment where I'm doing some actual direct testing. Or sometimes we need to call in some external experts.

Generally we want to establish their level of intellectual functioning, so we know what we are working with. We traditionally use the WISC III, an intelligence scale for children. We generally give that in English. We want to ensure that we're not working with a child who is

significantly delayed in terms of cognitive ability. We also generally give some visual motor type tests, and receptive/expressive language measures.

We want to assess a child's level of academic achievement in both languages. So for this child we used a French language measure, the FIAT, to test her reading and decoding comprehension of spelling, and in English as well. Sure enough with this particular child, she was presenting with really strong cognitive ability, this is a bright kid. She had at least average ability verbally and exceptional ability in the non-verbal area in terms of her ability to work with space and shapes and puzzles. The academic test showed this child was significantly delayed compared to what we would expect based on both her level of cognitive ability and her grade placement.

We found a little bit of an articulation delay when she pronounced words, so we had a speech therapist come in and do a bit more work with her. Keep in mind that the speech therapist has no background in French at all so this would have all been English language testing. She picked up that there was some difficulties with what we would term phonemic awareness, her ability to connect symbols on the paper to sounds and make all the right associations.

We knew she was reading below grade level but how was she reading, what kind of strategy was she using? We called in our district reading specialist to do some work with her. Again this would have been in English because we don't have a French reading specialist in our district. But we were able to get some clues about how this child processed print on the page and how she was connecting with it. We found that she was basically going letter by letter. She wasn't really using meaning, and a lot of other things like that.

Some of the other things we noticed with the child was that she was very low in taking risks, her confidence was in the cellar. In spelling, she would write one letter and then she would leave a blank and then maybe write another letter. She would never attempt to put in any vowel sounds or anything like that.

In sum, this child presented with a classic, language-based learning disability.

Step three in our process is program planning and implementation. We always start with a parent meeting. We go through all the results and what it means for the child and what we are going to do about it. In this particular case, as is often with French immersion kids, this is the point where the parent says right away, "We should take him out of French immersion, right?" But in this particular case we were surprised! The parent said, "I want her to stay in immersion." So management by relocation was not an option. The parents and the child were strongly committed to the French immersion program. So out of our meeting came an individual program plan (IPP) to meet the child's learning needs within the French immersion context.

In her case, her IPP for the remainder of the Grade 3 year had a teaching assistant coming into the classroom to help her read some of the Science and Social Studies materials, which were written way above her reading ability, having a teaching assistant scribe, or write down, her answers to tests because this child doesn't have enough written language ability, even though she knows all the stuff. We had the classroom teacher spend extra time with her by

having the principal and the counsellor cover the class during silent reading time. The speech therapist took her for her two sessions a week for work on phonemic awareness. We also had her doing some paired reading in English with an older partner.

How it works in the classroom....

- TA Assistance in/out of classroom
- Peer reading buddy
- French monitor
- Teacher
- Home Support
- In *this* case, *extremely* strong student commitment

Because we were able to put a program plan in place, we were able to apply for and receive some provisions for this child on the Provincial Achievement Tests. So when it came to the end of the year she was able to write her provincial achievement tests in Math and LA with a scribe, a reader, and extended time limits. This kid blew the top off the test. She performed at the high end of the acceptable range, into the excellence range in Math. She's just a real math whiz. So it has been exciting. But that takes us to September 1999.

In September 1999 the school had a 4/6 combined class, but we have the support of the school, and a teacher's assistant who is bilingual. She's in the classroom for 70-minute blocks in the morning and in the afternoon, 3 days a week.

The teaching assistant works with this child in the classroom and out of the classroom. But we mostly have the child in the classroom because we like to have her with us in the context of what we are doing and in a group with the TA. The self-esteem of that little girl has gone way up because she is not feeling out of place, she's not being pulled out. She spends less than a third of the time out of the classroom to do some quiet reading or some very specific tasks.

We were working on a computer integration project in language arts one time. The activity was advanced for her but she insisted that she wanted to do it. My expectations, of course, were lower than they would be for the rest of the students. But she worked on the computer with the teacher's assistant. It wasn't long before the assistant said to me, "You know what? She's telling me what to do on the computer!" So the assistant does the typing for her and helps her read. But she has a yearning for learning.

We also put her with a reading buddy. This little girl is thrilled to read with her, so there is lots of paired reading that goes on—in the hallway, out of the hallway, in the classroom. We also had a French monitor this year who came once a week. When all three of these supports—teacher's assistant, reading buddy, and monitor—are available in the classroom, the program plan works, even in a 4/6 split. As well, of course, we have the teacher working with her.

MCT

Ongoing Evaluation & Monitoring

- Progress is monitored.
- Reassessment occurs.
- Program plan is adjusted accordingly.

The home support is awesome. There's just no question

that this little girl is going to go through the French immersion program. And, in this case, we have extremely strong student commitment. It takes a lot of hard work to keep a student in French immersion under these circumstances. But we have all the cards in our favour, because we have the TA who is bilingual, who is working with us; we have the support in school; we have the parental support and that little girl wants to learn. She doesn't want to go outside at recess. She wants to stay in and keep learning, she wants to get ahead. She doesn't want to be behind. So she is self-motivated. That's the key, especially in our 4/6 situation.

Step four in our process is ongoing evaluation and monitoring to make sure that the child progresses. We have a couple of structures in place for doing that formally. We meet twice a year to formally review the individual program plan—again what we do is have a relief teacher come into the school so that we can sit down as a team during the school day and talk about where the child is at, what kind of progress has been made, what the stumbling blocks are. We can also talk about what we need to adjust and change for the next few months until we meet again. We develop the IPP usually toward the end of September or the first couple of weeks of October. We review about January or February. Then we review again near the end of May, or early June. More informally, and sometimes anecdotally, we are constantly reassessing.

We just reassessed this particular student. We'd like to say we've cured her, that she is reading at her grade level, but, no, it's not a miracle. There is some slow steady progress in some areas. She hasn't backslid; she hasn't stood still; she is moving forward. There are a couple of areas where she really took off. Her French reading decoding all of a sudden has just jumped. Why that particular skill we're not quite sure. Her English language reading comprehension has really moved upward and her spelling, although her score didn't change on the test, has really changed. It used to be consonant, blank, blank, blank, consonant but now she is attempting to put in all the sounds. The approximations are getting closer, and she is trying. Before she would just say she couldn't. We can't measure all the things about this child—she is taking risks, she doesn't have as many tummy aches to take her away from school all the time. We've still got lots of work ahead of us, but we know we're on the right track with her. The parents know that this is a long-term process, that we have no magic here.

Ongoing Challenges...

- Scheduling of Teacher Assistant Time
- Availability of FI Resources
- Helping other professionals to understand the FI philosophy and process
- Building teacher confidence
- Supporting parents in their decision to remain in FI
- Continuity from year to year

There are challenges, though. One is the scheduling of our TA, sharing her with the English program. She does the FI Kindergarten as well so Tuesdays and Fridays she is not available. She also works with the grade 3/5 split class, so she is very much in demand. Another challenge is the availability of FI resources that are at the child's grade level. We've been fortunate in that we belong to MERFIP (Metro Edmonton Regional French Immersion Programs group). We've used some of the information and books that have been labelled for the Early Literacy Initiative in French, a list of high interest, low vocabulary material from Edmonton Catholic Schools.

One of the key challenges is finding appropriate external assessment. There is someone in Calgary who does some types of assessment *en français*, but in our area our district reading specialists or school speech therapists don't have any background in French immersion philosophy. So when they determine children are having articulation difficulties and phonemic awareness difficulties in their mother tongue, guess what their first recommendation is? "Quickly, as fast as you can, get them out of French immersion." When they ask how they are doing in English and we explain that they haven't had English yet because they are only in Grade 2, the specialists have difficulty understanding. So that is an educational issue to address: we need to work with our external consultant and specialists to help them understand the philosophy and the process and that it's not a horrible thing to hold off the English until Grade 3.

Building teacher confidence in handling children with special learning needs is a major challenge in a school. We need to provide lots and lots of support to a teacher. The school counsellor helps them with the IPP development and setting up the reviews, and giving them TA time and giving them ideas. Fall transition meetings are held to maintain continuity for the child from the previous year. We don't want teachers to feel they're alone, especially with all the combined classes and challenges they are facing with the new curriculum.

Yet another challenge is supporting parents in their decision to stay in French immersion. We said the first question tends to be, "OK, so we should change out of French immersion, right?" But we tell them we should talk about it further. That may be one of the things we need to look at, and if parents really request it, we'll honour that request. But often the child can stay in the program and be successful if there is support from home.

In summary then a new student brings different needs, different strengths and a new brainstorming session. What worked for this little girl may not work for a another student. So we are back to that creative teamwork effort, and the referral council. And determining what can we do for this new child.

[Angèle Aubin]

The things that I hope to share with you today are:

- how the Learning Disabilities French Immersion Program came to my school,
- the teacher training involved in this program,
- the criteria for entering and leaving the program,
- the components of the program,
- the results of this LD program in French, and
- the advantages as I see them.

The French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program came into existence in June 1996. Edmonton Public had a new superintendent at that time, Dr. Emery Dosdall, who truly believed that every child should be educated in the public system. He proposed projects such as Quantum Leap, where schools could explore ways of improving student achievement. Some schools looked at modifying the school year. Schools were asked to think outside the box to find ways to improve student achievement. So it was within this climate that the LD program in French immersion came into being. It was also a time when middle management was eliminated from our school board structure. Principals reported directly to the superintendent.

My principal at the time, Merv Lastiwka, spoke to the board to request a pilot project. Initially Merv requested a two-year pilot project to see if it was possible to work with students with learning disabilities and keep them in the French immersion program. Faye Parker, Anne Louise Charette, and Bruce MacIntosh of Edmonton Public School's central staff prepared the initial report. Nadia Rousseau from Faculté Saint-Jean also came on board at that time. She was to gather qualitative information from students and parents of the program.

The rationale for the pilot project was the requests from parents who wanted their children to stay in French immersion even though they needed assistance for a learning disability. The parents had been asking for this program and the principals of the immersion sites had been asking for it.

Edmonton Public has had English LD sites since about 1984. These are designated sites where, once the child is identified as having a learning disability, the child can get assistance with the necessary additional funding. The intent of these programs is to reintegrate the child as quickly as possible back into the regular program. The general practice at Edmonton Public until then had been to recommend that children who had identified special needs not enrol in French immersion, or if they were already in French immersion it was often recommended that they leave the program and go into English. That practice exists at many schools and school boards because they haven't got the resources to support these children in French immersion. There was debate on whether this was the best practice for students with learning disabilities. (Please see box: The Debate)

Before we sought approval of the pilot project, we

THE DEBATE

Those who advocate removing students with learning disabilities from French immersion, present the following arguments:

- Most learning disabilities exhibit themselves as language processing difficulties and are evident in problems with reading, writing and spelling.
- Learning a second language places an additional burden of time and effort on a student who is experiencing difficulties in acquiring academic skills.
- Learning a second language may further confuse and frustrate a child who is having difficulty in learning one language effectively because the phonemic and syntactic systems of French and English are quite different, and some learning strategies are not applicable in both languages.
- Inter-linguistic interference may make intervention less effective.

Those who advocate the provision of intervention in French as well as English, advance the following points:

- Learning disabilities are neurological in origin, and not caused by the educational context, so that being in French immersion will not make the disabilities worse.
- Intervention provides coping strategies, and coping strategies can be taught in both languages.
- Removing children from French immersion because they have learning difficulties is damaging to their self-esteem because they perceive that they are not "smart enough" to learn French.
- Students in the francophone school system are not removed from English classes if they have learning difficulties.
- Some parents of children with learning disabilities do not wish to deprive their children of the opportunity of learning French.

Timeline

1993-1996 Requests from parents and principals for a new option for French Immersion LD students (Emie Jurkat)

June 11, 1996 Request for pilot project: Learning Disablities French Immersion Program (Bruce McIntosh, Anne-Louise Charette. Faye Parker, Merv Lastiwka)

September 1996- June 1997 First French Immersion LD class. 12 students. (4 boys, 8 girls) Grades 3 and 4

September 1997- June 1998 Grade 4 and 5

Feb. 10, 1998 Recommendation that the establishment of a French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program begin in the 1998-99 school year be approved. (Bruce McIntosh, Anne-Louise Charette, Faye Parker, Nadia Rousseau, Merv Lastiwka, Angele Aubin)

September, 1999 New group of thirteen students in Grades 3 and 4 start program at Holyrood

February, 2000 Twelve students are assessed to determine if they continue to meet the criteria for the program. None of them do.

September 2000 Undetermined number of students at Grade 3,4,5 level

gathered quite a bit of information. Edmonton Public Schools conducted a telephone survey in the spring of '96. There were 51 parents whose children had been in French immersion or were still in French immersion and also had learning disabilities who Edmonton Public Schools attempted to contact. The staff were successful in contacting 21 of these 51. Of the 21 parents contacted, 19 chose to transfer their child out of French immersion to access a LD program. But 14 of those 19 would have chosen to leave their child in French immersion if they could have received intervention in French and English. So already that was telling us that there was a base there of parents who really would have made other choices had the options been available. Eighteen of those 19 parents were supportive of the idea of the district establishing a LD program in French immersion.

In June 1996 we went to the board. The French Immersion LD program was recommended as a pilot project to allow the school district to be responsive to parental desires, while examining the effectiveness of such an approach for students with varying learning disabilities, without committing the district, at the outset, to an ongoing programming option. The following September we opened the program as a two-year pilot project at Holyrood.

But before we could open we had to ensure we had properly trained staff. We identified the skills and knowledge that we thought the LD teacher should have: bilingual, experience in the Lindamood Auditory Discrimination Program (the work done by Joanne Boissonneault), experience in early reading intervention, knowledge of learning disabilities, good communication skills, and successful teaching experiences.

We felt that it was important that the teacher be bilingual since the intervention was to be given in English and French. In my experience with this program, it has proven to be very effective to have someone available to work in both languages. Quite often I find that if I've introduced a concept in one language, it is very easy to reinforce it in the second language. I have found tremendous gains in time and in effort by being able to speak in both languages and

teach in both languages to my students. For example, if I've taught them how to prepare for reading a non-fiction text, and I've given mini-lessons on that in French, then in the next period, if we are doing something in English, we can use the same strategies, we're using the same coping techniques. And there are studies to back this up. Malicki, Fagan, and Norman from the University of Alberta showed in their research that the way children learn to read in French and English is very similar. The major difference seems to be on integration of text-based and knowledge-based information, and for our immersion students those skills tend to be stronger in English, which is logical because they have more prior knowledge to draw from in English than they will have in French.

We included training in the Lindamood Auditory Discrimination Program in part because a study done by Daniel Demers [of British Columbia, please see the workshop "A Changing Perspective"] showed that students with auditory processing difficulties tend to be less successful in French immersion.

The teacher in LD, working with students, whether it be in English or in French, needs to have a good knowledge of phonemic awareness, as well. I found that many of the programs that the English-only program will offer, such as *Making Words* by Patricia Cunningham or the programs of Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies developed in the United States by Vanderbilt are very easily translated and adaptable in French. I've spent a lot of my time adapting some of those materials in order to do the same types of activities with French; it works very well. The philosophy and the activities in the balanced literacy programs hold a lot of promise for French immersion, since they can be adapted and used in French immersion.

The part-time teacher assistant for my classroom happens to be the mother of a LD student, who left the immersion program to join a LD program, because there was no other option available at the time. Her son is now in Grade 10 and one of the honour students at his high school. I think being a mother brings another dimension to our program, sensitivity to these students. She really understands how hard they have to work. She feels their frustration with them and I think that is an important component of any LD teacher or classroom teacher for that matter. We need people with empathy to work with these students.

A big part of my job is to educate the parents about what LD is so that they can better understand their child, support their child, and advocate for their child. I also try to equip my students with enough self-assurance and enough knowledge of themselves so that once they leave they can advocate for themselves. Once they go to junior high or the next classroom, they can go up to that teacher and say: "You know, it is best for me when I tape record the session rather than just take notes, because I really have a hard time taking notes and listening at the same time. Is that an inconvenience for you? Is it possible to give me a copy of your overheads because taking notes is difficult for me...."

We do a lot of role playing in my class. We do a lot of work on self-esteem. We do a lot of work on getting the students to understand who they are in terms of learners, to see their strengths, to understand their weaknesses, and to find the coping strategies to go around the road blocks that they have.

But I am getting ahead of myself. By September, we were up and running. I started the year with 12 students, four boys and eight girls. The students were all in grades 3 and 4, they

came from various schools within Edmonton. Some students were bused considerable distances for this program.

Criteria for the program had to be established so that we could obtain the funding. Our program is for students who have a minimum of one year delay in academic achievement, at least two areas (math, word recognition or decoding, reading comprehension, spelling, written language) below the 10th percentile, and an IQ assessment of 100 or more. Extra criteria were added for a student who is in French immersion. Students, who are in immersion or a bilingual program, cannot be expected to achieve on measures of English and English writing at the norm for students who have had instruction in English. Therefore we delay testing until the end of Grade 2, when they've had a full year of instruction in English. And the second criterion is that the learning disability has to be pervasive in both languages and the testing has to be done in both languages.

We also have teacher criteria and checklists to eliminate students who have behaviour problems. It is not a program for children with behaviour problems. We do have a high proportion of students that have attention problems though; it is very interesting classroom to work in.

**CHANGE IN HLAT READING GRADE
BETWEEN 1996 AND 1997
STUDENTS IN THEIR FIRST YEAR OF LEARNING DISABILITIES PROGRAM**

	N	Loss of 1 grade	No change	Increase of 1 grade	Increase of two grades	Increase of 3 or more grades
French immersion LD program	10			4 or 40%	6 or 60%	
English LD Program Previously French immersion	7			5 or 71%	2 or 29%	
English LD	235	2%	19%	48%	28%	3%

Exhibit 1 Change in HLAT Reading Grade

I'm going to go on to the results after the program was up and running for two years. Edmonton Public central office compared the students that were in this French immersion LD program to students that had previously been in French immersion but had left to go to an English LD program. They also compared them to English only LD students, students that have never been in French immersion. The test they used is what we call HLAT, or Highest Level of Achievement Test. It is a test that all schools in Edmonton Public administer to their students in May. There is a writing component and a reading component. The reading component is basically the Canadian Test of Basic Skills. The writing component is a writing prompt, that is to say, every child is given the same story starter. Every child in our district will write on the same topic, using the same prompt, on the same day of the school year. This is done every year so that we can see growth in writing skills of students. The writing samples are then marked in terms of grade level and a rubric is developed to give the evaluator an idea of what a Grade 2 piece of writing looks like compared to a Grade 3 piece of writing. Once a grade level is assigned to the piece of writing, the marker also gives it an achievement level: adequate, proficient or excellent.

GRADE LEVEL ON HLAT READING COMPARED WITH YEAR IN SCHOOL AFTER 1 YEAR IN LEARNING DISABILITIES PROGRAM						
	N	3 grades below	2 grades below	1 grade below	At grade level	1 year above
French immersion LD program	11			2 or 18%	9 or 82%	
English LD Program Previously French immersion	7			4 or 57%	2 or 29%	1 or 14%
English LD	235	10%	9%	39%	46%	3%

Exhibit 2 HLAT Reading Level After One Year

According to the reading scores of my French immersion class after only one year of being in the program (please see Exhibit 1), 40% of my students had increased by one grade level in terms of reading. Sixty percent of them had increased by two grade levels. In the admittedly small sample of English LD students previously in French immersion, 71 percent had increased by one grade level and 29% by two grade levels. In the English program, it is a lot more varied but the majority of the students increased by one grade level. These early results, after just one year, indicated that it was going to be a fairly successful program.

The reading levels of the same three groupings were then compared to grade level (please see Exhibit 2). Eighty-two percent of my students were now reading at grade level after one year. In the English program, 46% were reading at grade level. Of the students who had been in immersion but had left to go to the English LD program, 57% were still one grade below. Again that was encouraging for the program.

In writing, 100% of my students were now at grade level compared to 40% and 42% in the other groups (please see Exhibit 3). A parent survey found that the results were very similar between the English LD parents and the French immersion parents. Parents from the French immersion LD program wrote letters to the board saying, "Please keep this program going. It's really making a difference in my child's life." That was very satisfying for me as their teacher. A staff satisfaction survey was done as well. So we had all sorts of data on the success of the program.

Nadia Rousseau from Faculté Saint-Jean studied the qualitative aspects, the emotional growth of these children, their feeling of satisfaction, their self-esteem. It was extraordinary to see these children. I had taken pictures of them the very first day of school and then I looked at the pictures at the end of the school year. You can easily see in their body language that they're no longer discouraged and unsure of themselves.

GRADE LEVEL ON HLAT WRITING COMPARED WITH YEAR IN SCHOOL AFTER 1 YEAR IN LEARNING DISABILITIES PROGRAM					
	N	2 grades below	1 grade below	At grade level	1 year above
French immersion LD program	4			4 or 100%	
English LD Program Previously French immersion	5		3 or 60%	2 or 40%	
English LD	163	20%	39%	42%	

Exhibit 3 HLAT Writing Level After One Year

I would loved to have been able to bring my students to talk to you. They would have told you how important this program has been for them. They've become wonderful spokesmen for themselves. I had one of my students come to the university and talk to the class I was teaching in January. This is a Grade 7 student who was brave enough to come and talk to university students. They are extraordinary, my kids.

Facilitator: Dr. Anthony Wall, University of Calgary

The next portion of the workshop involved a facilitated exploration by delegates of the implications for practice in their own schools and districts. The result was the identification of the following learnings:

1. Understand that French immersion students with learning difficulties can remain in French immersion if the support is there.

   Rationale: This session gave practical examples of how it is possible to give children the help they need to remain in French immersion if they have learning difficulties. Pulling a child out of immersion because of learning difficulties will not cure the problem: the child will have the same difficulties in any learning environment. However, the decision to remove a child from the immersion program can have devastating effects on the self-esteem of the child involved.

2. Better dissemination of facts and research to staff and parents through Alberta Learning, and CPF and the Learning Disabilities Association.

   Rationale: People do not generally understand that most often it is possible to keep a child with learning difficulties in the French immersion stream. Alberta Learning, CPF and the Learning Disabilities Association share the responsibility of getting this message out to parents. But educational professionals also need to know this: immersion teachers themselves, guidance counsellors, school psychologists, and other teachers.

3. Mandatory training in inclusive education at Faculté Saint-Jean through teleconferences.

   Rationale: The teacher training program for French immersion should contain a mandatory element related to children with learning difficulties and to methods of dealing with those difficulties. The aim is to give all future and present teachers the tools to make French immersion become an inclusive education. Teleconferencing and professional development opportunities can be used to give these tools to teachers already teaching French immersion.

4. Give equitable access for French immersion students to special services.

   Rationale: Children in French immersion have just as much a right to access special services as children in the traditional stream. French immersion students should not be obliged to leave French immersion in order to access these services.

ATTACHMENT

REFERRAL COUNCIL - STUDENT REFERRAL FORM

Student Name: _____ **Grade:** _____

Teacher Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1. The general purpose of this referral is (check as many as apply):

☐ academic ☐ social/emotional ☐ physical health/hygiene ☐ behavioral

☐ family issues ☐ speech/language ☐ other: _____

2. This student's strengths are (check as many as apply):

☐ gets along with other children ☐ good in math ☐ good in reading

☐ is a good athlete ☐ is musical ☐ is artistic

☐ gets along with staff ☐ has a good imagination ☐ is creative

☐ has leadership potential ☐ is organized ☐ able to pay attention

☐ has a supportive home environment ☐ has a good sense of humour

☐ is a neat worker (i.e., printing) ☐ is cooperative ☐ wants to improve

☐ other: _____

3. This student's areas of difficulty include (check as many as apply):

☐ reading decoding ☐ reading comprehension ☐ spelling skills ☐ written expression

☐ oral expression ☐ inattentiveness ☐ listening skills ☐ math computation

☐ math problem solving ☐ science ☐ social studies ☐ out of seat behavior

☐ call outs ☐ verbal aggression to others ☐ physical aggression to others

☐ non-compliance with staff requests ☐ making/keeping friends ☐ running away from class

☐ other: _____

4. **What strategies/methods have been attempted/tried with this student to date and with what level of success?**

_____

_____

_____

5. **What specific information do you hope to gain from a Referral Council meeting?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

ACTION PLAN (To be completed during Referral Council meeting)

What will be done?	By whom?	By when?

UNE DÉMARCHE PAR ÉTAPES

2001

Modèle d'intervention progressive conçu pour offrir des services éducatifs particuliers aux élèves ayant des besoins spéciaux

Alberta
LEARNING
Direction de l'éducation française

MODÈLE D'INTERVENTION PROGRESSIVE CONÇU POUR OFFRIR DES SERVICES ÉDUCATIFS PARTICULIERS AUX ÉLÈVES AYANT DES BESOINS SPÉCIAUX

Première étape – mesures informelles

L'enseignant remarque que l'élève a des besoins spéciaux.

- L'enseignant observe attentivement l'élève et documente ses observations.

- Lors d'une rencontre individuelle avec l'élève, l'enseignant :
  - discute de ses observations;
  - évalue la motivation de l'élève et sa compréhension de la situation;
  - demande à l'élève s'il accepte de collaborer;
  - fixe avec l'élève **un ou deux objectifs à court terme** et des moyens concrets pour les atteindre;
  - fait une synthèse de la rencontre avec l'élève;
  - avise la direction de ses démarches.

- L'enseignant communique avec les parents :
  - les informe des difficultés de leur enfant;
  - discute avec eux de la situation;
  - recueille leurs perceptions;
  - crée un partenariat avec eux;
  - assure un suivi (follow-up).

- L'enseignant garde un dossier des décisions prises avec l'élève et ses parents. Ce dossier devrait contenir des notes anecdotiques, des grilles, des histogrammes, etc.

➤ Est-ce que les démarches entreprises ont permis de résoudre le problème?

Si **oui**, on en reste là. Si **non**, on passe à l'étape suivante.

Remarque : Dans le présent document, le générique masculin est utilisé sans aucune discrimination et uniquement dans le but d'alléger le texte.

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Deuxième étape – mesures informelles

L'enseignant cherche à aider l'élève en demandant du soutien auprès de ses collègues.

- L'enseigant consulte le dossier de l'élève.

- L'enseignant discute du problème avec d'autres intervenants dans le but d'apporter un éclairage nouveau sur la perception qu'il a de l'élève et sur le contexte dans lequel ce dernier évolue. Il peut faire appel, par exemple, à :
  - un collègue;
  - au personnel de soutien, un enseignant-ressource, un professionnel non-enseignant;
  - un cercle d'entraide;
  - la direction de l'école.

- L'enseignant utilise d'autres moyens auprès de l'élève et des parents, par exemple :

  <u>auprès de l'élève</u>
  - observation plus systématique de l'élève;
  - collecte d'information sur ses forces et ses intérêts;
  - entente écrite avec l'élève précisant les comportements attendus;
  - système d'émulation;
  - contrat avec l'élève;
  - modification des stratégies d'enseignement et d'évaluation;
  - feuille de route;
  - soutien par le groupe (utilisation des pairs);
  - fiche de communication maison-école;

  <u>auprès des parents</u>

  Certaines attitudes favorisent la collaboration :
  - utiliser un langage accessible aux parents;
  - chercher des solutions ensemble;
  - assurer un suivi régulier;
  - exprimer de part et d'autre ses besoins et ses limites comme partenaires.

- L'enseignant continue de documenter ses observations et ses interventions auprès de l'élève et de ses parents.

➤ Ces nouvelles interventions ont-elles permis à l'élève de progresser suffisamment?
Si **oui**, on en reste là.
Si **non**, on répond aux questions suivantes :

- Est-ce que l'intervention dure depuis assez longtemps?
- Est-ce que plusieurs essais soutenus ont été faits?

Dans l'affirmative, on passe à l'étape suivante.

Troisième étape – mesures formelles

L'enseignant, avec l'aide de la direction, procède à une analyse plus poussée de la situation de l'élève.

- L'enseignant trace un bilan de la situation à la direction de l'école et lui fait part des interventions faites auprès de l'élève et de ses parents.

- La direction rassemble les personnes directement concernées (comité spécial), et détermine un échéancier afin de réaliser **une évaluation et (ou) une consultation psychoéducative(s)**. À cette étape, il est primordial d'associer les parents et d'obtenir leur autorisation avant de procéder à l'évaluation.

- La collaboration des organismes extérieurs peut être sollicitée (Réseau provincial d'adaptation scolaire, Régie de la santé [SHIP], médecins, services sociaux, psychologues en pratique privée, etc.).

- **L'évaluation psychoéducative porte généralement sur l'apprentissage et le comportement de l'élève.** Compte tenu des outils d'évaluation, cet exercice a pour but d'éclairer l'équipe-école sur ses capacités intellectuelles (la mémoire, le langage, les styles d'apprentissage), la personnalité, le comportement, etc. Cette démarche permet également d'offrir une programmation adaptée aux besoins de l'élève.

Après l'évaluation ou à la consultation psychoéducative, la direction organise une rencontre avec les personnes concernées afin de permettre aux partenaires de s'entendre sur :

- une définition commune du problème;
- les besoins de l'élève;
- les objectifs à travailler;
- les services éducatifs adaptés.

➤ Selon les résultats de l'évaluation psychoéducative, l'élève présente-t-il les caractéristiques retenues par Alberta Learning pour fin de codification?

➤ Quels services éducatifs adaptés aux besoins de l'élève faut-il dispenser?

L'élève est identifié et aura un plan d'action ou un plan d'intervention.

Quatrième et Cinquième étapes – services adaptés et plan d'action ou plan d'intervention

Intervention ponctuelle et implication des partenaires

- La direction ou la personne mandatée par celle-ci (coordonnateur) réunit les personnes concernées (les plus près de l'élève) afin de préparer le plan d'action ou le plan d'intervention.

Les documents (plan d'action et plan d'intervention) comprennent :

- des renseignements sur les forces et les faiblesses de l'élève;
- des objectifs à court terme;
- les moyens nécessaires pour atteindre les objectifs;
- le nom des responsables des diverses interventions;
- un échéancier pour la réalisation du plan d'intervention et pour l'évaluation du progrès.

Des services éducatifs particuliers sont proposés, par exemple :

- programme de modification de comportement;
- programme d'enseignement individualisé;
- retrait de la classe avec encadrement;
- service de soutien ou d'accompagnement (aide-élève, enseignant-ressource, psychologue, spécialiste du comportement, etc.).

- Les parents demeurent partenaires de l'école. La collaboration des organismes extérieurs peut être sollicitée (Réseau provincial d'adaptation scolaire, Régie de la santé [SHIP], médecins, services sociaux, psychologues en pratique privée, etc.).

L'intervention

- En collaboration avec les parents et les personnes concernées, le plan est appliqué, tel que décidé.
- La coordination est assumée par une personne qui facilite la réalisation du plan, centralise l'information et favorise la communication avec les membres.

Le suivi

- Après quatre ou six semaines, l'équipe évalue ses actions et le cheminement de l'élève et elle tient compte de l'information ainsi obtenue, jetant un regard nouveau sur la situation. Ce nouvel exercice permet de réajuster l'action et de redéfinir les objectifs.
- L'équipe s'engage de nouveau à poursuivre les objectifs du plan.

➤ Est-ce que tous les membres souscrivent au contenu du plan d'action ou plan d'intervention?

➤ Que faut-il pour que le plan soit mis en œuvre?

➤ Est-ce que la direction a besoin d'information additionnelle sur les services offerts par le conseil scolaire ou à l'extérieur de celui-ci?

➤ Est-ce que le plan se déroule selon les prévisions?

➤ Est-ce que l'intervention a permis à l'élève de progresser?

➤ Est-ce que des modifications doivent être apportées au plan d'action ou d'intervention?

Selon les réponses aux questions précédentes, l'équipe s'interroge sur la nécessité de poursuivre ou non le plan d'action ou d'intervention et de continuer à offrir les services éducatifs adaptés.

Lectures suggérées

ALBERTA EDUCATION. *Standards for Psycho-educational Assessment*, Edmonton, 1994, 35 p.

ALBERTA EDUCATION. *Guide de l'éducation pour les élèves ayant des besoins spéciaux*, Edmonton, 1996, 33 p.

ALBERTA EDUCATION. *Le plan d'intervention personnalisé*, Edmonton, 1998, 42 p.

ALBERTA LEARNING. *Enseigner aux élèves ayant des troubles émotionnels et (ou) des psychopathologies*, Edmonton, 2000, 177 p.

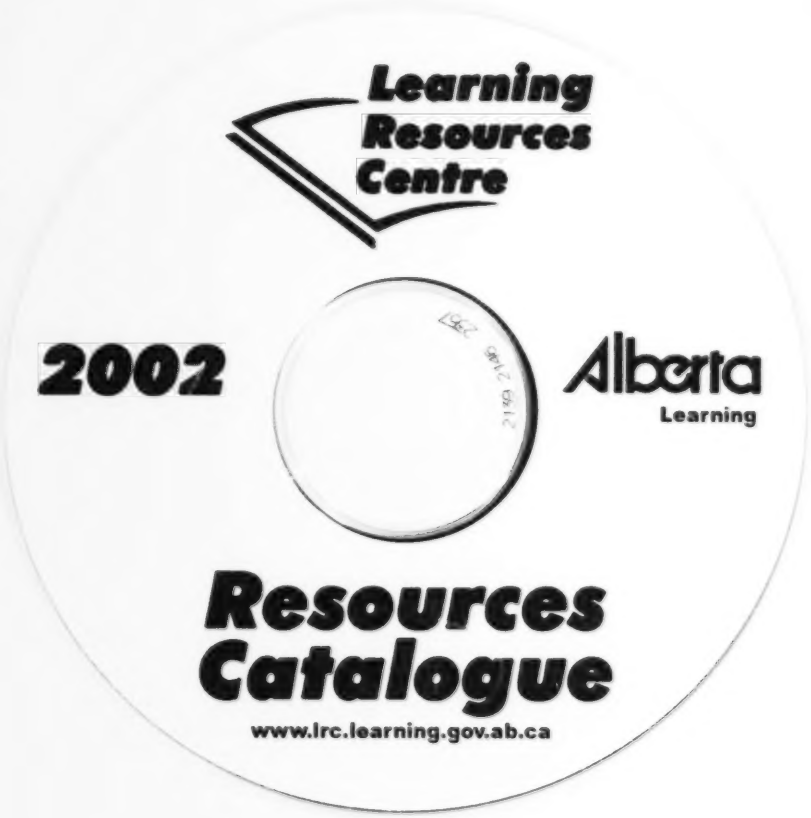
ALBERTA LEARNING. *Enseigner aux élèves ayant des troubles d'apprentissage*, Edmonton (à paraître).

ALBERTA LEARNING. *Enseigner aux élèves doués et talentueux*, Edmonton (à paraître).

LEBLANC, J. *Le plan de rééducation individualisé (PRI). Une approche prometteuse pour prévenir le redoublement*, Montréal, Chenelière/McGraw-Hill, 2000.

Appendix H

- LRC **Resources Catalogue** on CD-ROM.



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